

Wednesday December 18 1996

Abu Dhabi D 6.50, Albania L 2.20, Andorra FF 10, Australia AS 30, Azerbaijan AZ 10, Bahamas BS 10, Bangladesh T 10, Belgium B 10, Benin C 10, Bolivia B 10, Botswana P 10, Brazil R 10, Bulgaria B 10, Canada C 10, Cayman Islands KY 10, Czech Republic K 10, Denmark DK 10, Ecuador E 10, Egypt EG 10, Finland F 10, France FF 10, Germany DM 3.50, Greece D 400, Hong Kong HK 25, Hungary H 20, Iceland IS 10, India IN 10, Israel IL 10, Italy I 10, Japan Y 10, Korea S 10, Kuwait KD 10, Latvia LV 10, Lithuania LT 10, Luxembourg LL 300, Macedonia MK 10, Malawi M 10, Malaysia M 10, Mexico MX 10, Morocco M 10, Netherlands G 40, Norway NK 10, Oman O 10, Pakistan PK 10, Panama P 10, Paraguay P 10, Peru P 10, Portugal P 10, Romania R 10, Russia R 10, Saudi Arabia S 10, Singapore S 10, Slovakia SK 10, Slovenia S 10, South Africa R 10, Spain P 10, Sweden S 10, Switzerland SF 3.20, Thailand T 10, Turkey T 10, USA US 2.75

The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR 46,730

Printed in London, Manchester, Frankfurt and Roubaix

What Felix Dennis did next

Whiz-kid of Oz

G2 with European weather



Comment, page 9

Comment, page 9

Society



Labour MEP Hugh Kerr, threatened with deselection for allegedly bringing party into disrepute

Tories caught cheating in crucial vote

Michael White Political Editor

THE Government was last night attempting to shrug off Labour and Liberal Democrat outrage after the discovery that Tory whips had cheated the Opposition over the votes of three MPs in the tight Commons debate on fishing policy.



Michael Heseltine (left), yesterday

"The Whips are a Byzantine part of the constitution. Whether this or that was said in private and to whom, I do not know. But whatever happened, we would have won that vote."

Michael Heseltine (left), yesterday

room. But a whips spokesman said they had nothing to apologise for — a judgment not shared by more experienced Tory veterans of the whips' office.

The Labour MEP: I only offered Tony some advice

The Party: You're out, comrade

Stephen Bates in Brussels

THE first victim of New Labour's drive to exert discipline and prevent elected members bringing the party into disrepute will be a left-wing member of the European Parliament who heckled Tony Blair at October's party conference.

apparatchiks were livid that I had deflected the Great Leader on his way from the arena, but frankly it was very civilised and I cannot see that I have brought the party into disrepute.

The disciplinary threat follows a series of disputes with the party at Westminster over Mr Blair's modernising drive. They culminated in a public row last year, with 36 members of the European group, including Mr Kerr, signing an advertisement in the Guardian opposing the reform of Clause 4 of the party's constitution.

Mr Kerr has made little secret of his contempt for the party's direction in letters to the Guardian and articles for magazines such as *Tribune*. The 52-year-old former university lecturer and one-time

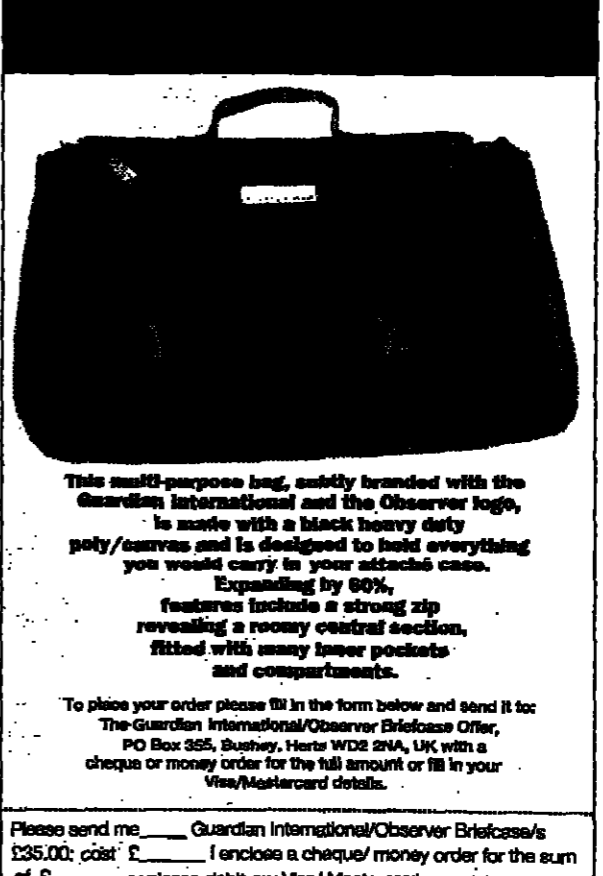
Zaireans greet devil they know

Ruaridh Nicoll in Kinshasa reports on the return from convalescence of President Mobutu

EMERGING on to the steps of his chartered plane, Mobutu Sese Seko, the man in the leopard-skin hat, looked out happily on the country he has pillaged for 30 years. He was greeted by an enormous roar.

Thousands of Zaireans woke under the jet that had flown him to the capital, Kinshasa, yesterday from exile in France as if they wanted to carry the plane on their shoulders. After nearly a year their "marabou" had come home. Two men held up a banner that read "Mobutu Equals Solution".

The Guardian International & The Observer Briefcase



This multi-purpose bag, subtly branded with the Guardian International and the Observer logo, is made with a black heavy duty poly/canvas and is designed to hold everything you would carry in your school case.

Inside

Britain: Steven Packman, who denies supplying ecstasy to Leah Betts, may face a jury trial after a judge was unable to reach a verdict. **4**

World News

Germany's Speaker was at the centre of sleaze allegations over claims she used costly official transport for her private use. **7**

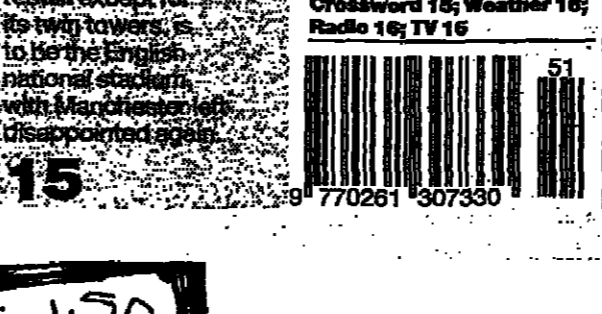
Finance

A committee of MPs highlighted several weaknesses in the Bank of England's handling of the collapse last year of Barings Bank. **11**

Sport

Wembley to be rebuilt except for its twin towers is to be the English national stadium with Manchester City as the favoured club. **15**

Comment and Letters 6; Obituaries 10; G2; Crossword 15; Weather 16; Radio 16; TV 16

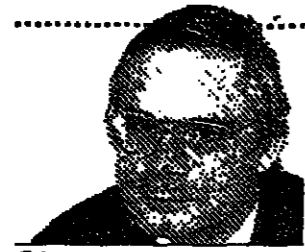


770261 307330

Handwritten signature or mark

Sketch

Fading Twilight of the Dwarves



Simon Hoggart

PARLIAMENT has become an endless version of the Ring Cycle. Like Bernard Levin, we are fated to sit in the same uncomfortable seat, witnessing the same repeated events...

from goosing chalet girls in ski resorts - I supplied the last two, but I'm sure that's what he meant. Mr Major said: "There is no doubt that this is a glowing report..."

Review

Fast show fails Schoenberg

Andrew Clements Birmingham Contemporary Music Group/Harding Queen Elizabeth Hall

BIRMINGHAM Contemporary Music Group is the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's younger sibling, drawing its members from the ranks of the orchestra but rapidly carving out a profile of its own...

to 1993, and Kai for cello and chamber orchestra was one of the major fruits of that collaboration, composed in 1990 for the group's principal cellist, Ulrike Heinen...

Bomb convictions stand after report finds contaminated machine did not affect explosives evidence

Howard bars IRA appeals

Alain Travis Home Affairs Editor MICHAEL HOWARD, the Home Secretary, insisted last night that the convictions of 14 IRA bombers will stand after receiving the results of an official inquiry...



Patrick Hayes... jailed for Harrods litter bin blast



Jan Taylor... alleged to be a splinter group member



Dennis Kinsella... jailed for Warrington gasworks bomb



John Kinsella... petty crook who allegedly buried Semtex



Gerald Mackin... jailed for planting 12 bombs in London

The cases

THE 14 cases that Professor Brian Caddy looked at were: SEAN McNULTY, jailed for 15 years in 1994 for bombing oil and gas terminals on Tyneside...

ROBERT FRYERS, a Belfast bomber serving 25 years for conspiracy to cause explosions. Was arrested at north London bus stop with a Semtex device in a holdall.

ETHEL LAMB, Canning's English lover, was 60 when jailed for three years. He duped her into using her west London home as a bomb factory. Since died.

PAIRIC MacFLOINN and DENNIS KINSELLA, jailed for 35 and 25 years for Warrington gasworks blast.

JOHN KINSELLA, jailed for 16 years for possessing explosives. A petty criminal and Dennis Kinsella's uncle, he buried a bag of Semtex in an allotment.

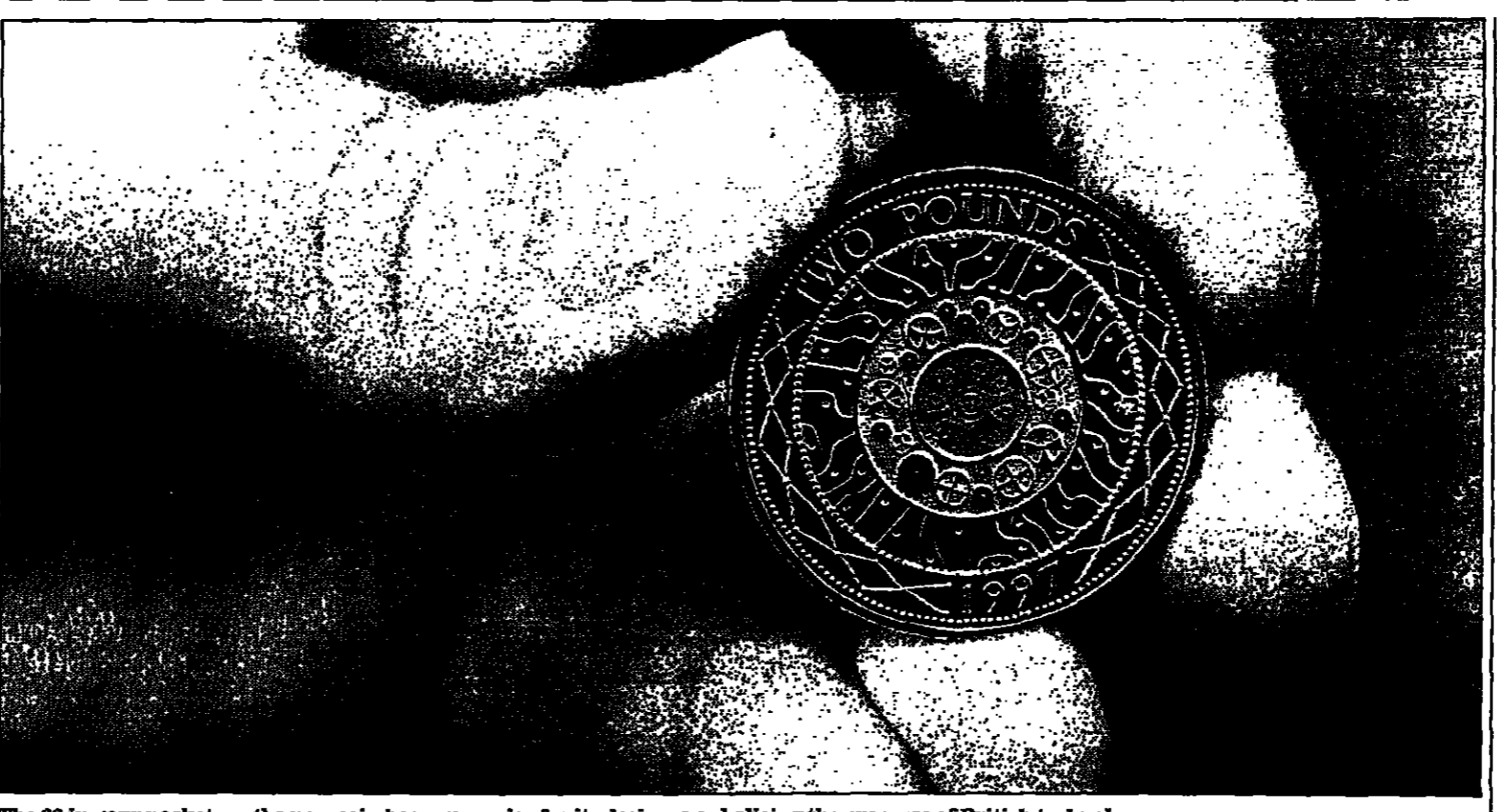
It was only a fortunate accident that brought the problem to light. But his detailed examination of all 14 cases had shown that the explosive traces had "no observable effect" on the samples tested.

that the evidence of contamination should be tested in the Court of Appeal. Neil O'May, solicitor for Dennis Kinsella, said: "Every case where the prosecution has relied on evidence from this laboratory to convict people should be referred to the Court of Appeal without any other question arising."

body is surprised by the outcome. But it won't stop the campaign to prove the innocence of any of these people. Lawyers for Sean McNulty, whose conviction relied most heavily on the forensic evidence, said the Caddy report would prove "most relevant" for his Court of Appeal hearing, which is pending.

with two of Prof Caddy's recommendations. He said that the case for a Forensic Sciences Inspectorate implied a "system of statutory regulation" which was more far reaching than the advisory council recommended by the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice four years ago.

part in explosives should end. He argued there were cases where what was thought were simple incendiary devices turned out to be bombs. But Mr Howard rejected this, saying he did not want to remove police discretion altogether.



The £2 in your pocket... the new coin has won praise for its design, symbolising the progress of British technology

Mint's £2 sweetie coins market in good taste

Martin Wahnwright THE British answer to the euro was unveiled yesterday, with a gritty design of cogs and mechanical widgets to contrast with the pastel sketches of architecture favoured by Brussels.

face value of £2. Angela Knight, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, denied that the new denomination - which follows a series of trial commemorative £2 coins in the last decade - was a backdoor version of inflation.

Aesthetic opinion was generally agreed that this would be a good thing, with the design and double colouring winning points for taste as well as imagination.

The coin also has a milled rim with the inscription "standing on the shoulders of giants" from Sir Isaac Newton's modest description of how earlier thinkers had helped him to discover gravity.

For the lucky people let through by the army, a vast buffet had been laid out beside the city centre, singing and shouting. Stylishly dressed people mingled with the poor in the run-down city.

Zaireans welcome back devil they know

continued from page 1 and the joy is shared by all Africans. For 30 years he has won wars, and he has kept the country together. What has happened in the east has happened because he is absent and now the enemy are in retreat.

Advertisement for Dell Dimension XPS 1333s Business Bundle. Features include Intel Pentium Processor, 16MB SDRAM, Intel 430VX PCMCIA, 512Kb Cache, 2Gb EIDE Hard Drive, 512 Powergraph 64 3D PCI Graphics Card, 15" Colour SVGA Monitor, Eight Speed CD-ROM Drive, Integrated 16-bit Sound and AC90 Speakers, and Microsoft Windows 95 & MS Office Professional 95. Price: £9.99 per week (£11.97 inc. delivery and VAT). Includes a free upgrade to a Twelve Speed CD-ROM Drive for the first 500 orders only.

صكنا من الامم

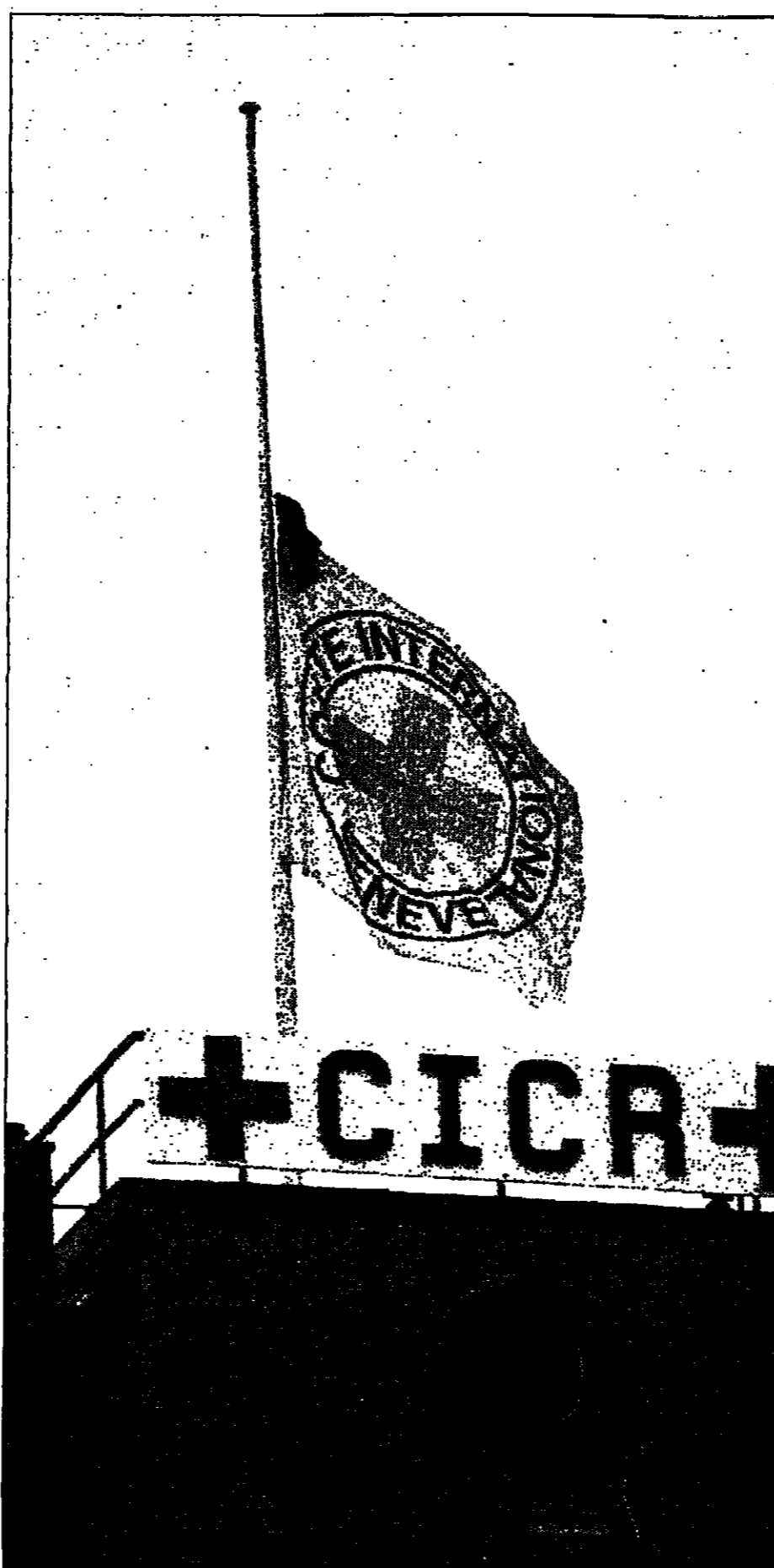
Aid agencies under fire



Red Cross pulls foreign staff out of Chechnia after nurses are killed in hospital atrocity

David Hearst in Moscow

SENIOR officials of the International Committee of the Red Cross questioned last night whether international aid organisations could continue to work in war zones after five nurses were murdered as they slept in their beds in a hospital in southern Chechnia yesterday. Masked gunmen smashed down the doors of a recently opened Red Cross hospital in Novye Atagi, a village south of the capital Grozny, and, using silencers, shot dead each of the nurses. A construction technician was also murdered. A seventh victim, left for dead, survived with gunshot wounds and was being evacuated last night. It was the worst single atrocity the Red Cross has suffered in its 120-year history. Announcing that all foreign Red Cross staff were being pulled out of Chechnia, Thierry Meyrat, head of the delegation in Moscow, said he was "very pessimistic" that they would ever return. "There is a dramatic tendency not only in this conflict but many others, where there is no respect for the Red Cross or humanitarian organisations. The effect of such a situation is that you become a sort of military target and you lose your neutrality," he said. The Red Cross pullout will leave the shattered city of Grozny bereft of help. The ICRC was the only organisation providing medical help, clean water, sewerage repair and meals for schoolchildren. Russian aid agencies were among those who have already been pulled out after a spate of kidnappings and armed attacks. Two large ransom demands have been paid by foreign aid agencies to recover their staff. The dead were all senior members of the ICRC. They were identified last night as Hans Elkerhout, a construction technician from the Netherlands; Nancy Malloy, a medical administrator, aged 51, from Canada; nurses Inshajong Posa, aged 42, and Gunhild Myklebust, aged 55, from Norway; Sheryl Thayer from New Zealand; and Fernanda Cavado, aged 45, from Spain. Christophe Hensche, the Swiss national in charge of the Novye Atagi office, was wounded. A German doctor and two X-ray technicians who were asleep in an adjacent building were unharmed. The shootings were designed to shatter Chechnia's fragile peace as Russian troops continue to withdraw before elections planned for January 27. Any one of a dozen groups could be responsible, including gunmen loyal to the ousted Islamist government of Doku Zavgayev, elements in the Russian military or their secret services who are against the troop withdrawal, or any one of a number of splinter groups and maverick Chechen gangs interested in destabilising the elections. Novye Atagi hospital, which opened in September to deal with the casualties of the retaking of Grozny by the separatist army, is under the control of a Chechen local commander, Ali Hajiev Shankan. He had been used by the Red Cross as an intermediary when one of their staff was kidnapped a month ago. The villagers of Novye Atagi gathered to pay their respects outside the hospital compound as the coffins were loaded on to trucks. Russian Kutayev, a Chechen government minister, said the killings were "an intentional and planned provocation aimed at felling" the elections. The Russian government made its ritual condemnation. Viktor Chernomyrdin, the prime minister, said it was a "cruel and senseless" crime aimed at destabilising the region. But officials privately washed their hands of responsibility, saying that security in the region was now solely provided by the separatist coalition government of Aslan Maskhadov. A further sign that Chechnia was descending into anarchy was the continued refusal of a Chechen field commander, Salman Raduyev, to free 21 Russian policemen seized by his group last Saturday. The bearded commander, who masterminded the hostage-taking of 42 civilians on the Dagestan border last January, revelled in his power. "I have put my troops on red alert," he said outside his headquarters in Novye Gorodki. "If they [Russian or official Chechen forces] want to fight with me, let them come and we see who wins." A group of 80 fighters loyal to Gen Raduyev disarmed and seized the policemen from the city of Penza, central Russia, when they tried to stop his motorcade driving into Dagestan. Gen Raduyev had planned to attend a meeting of Chechens in Dagestan.



The Red Cross flag flies at half-mast at its headquarters in Geneva after the assassination of six delegates in Novye Atagi hospital (above left)

Turmoil after Saunders win

Don Atkinson in Strasbourg and David Gow

THE embattled Serious Fraud Office last night vowed to resist any attempt by the disgraced former Guinness chairman Ernest Saunders to overturn his conviction for fraud after he won a substantial victory in his decade-long battle to clear his name. But the judgment by the European Court of Human Rights that Mr Saunders had not been given a fair trial will force an urgent review of the law on corporate fraud and is yet another blow to government efforts to tackle City corruption. In a verdict hotly contested by Eurosceptic Conservative lawyers, the court said Mr Saunders' right not to incriminate himself had been infringed at his 1990 trial because evidence obtained from him by government inspectors had later been used against him in a criminal prosecution. It casts serious doubt on the methods used by the Department of Trade and Industry and the SFO to investigate alleged corporate corruption, including wide-ranging powers to force suspects to answer questions that will almost certainly have to be abandoned. Tony Woodcock, of solicitors Stephenson Harwood, said last night: "The European Court has said it is not good enough for suspects' rights to be curtailed in court cases." At a news conference which ended in chaos, with journalists shouting abuse at the former Guinness chairman, Mr Saunders and his lawyer and "human rights consultant" held out the prospect of reopening the entire case by appealing again to the Court of Appeal via the Home Secretary, Michael Howard. The angry session came to an abrupt end when Mr Saunders refused to respond to questions on his recovery from pre-senile dementia which led the Court of Appeal to halve his original sentence. Mr Saunders claimed that the Strasbourg judges, who voted 16-4 in his favour, had suggested he would have been acquitted at his 1990 fraud trial if seven DTI interviews with him had been ruled inadmissible. But the SFO said the court had made plain it could not speculate whether the outcome of the original trial would have been any different. "We shall therefore resist any attempt to overturn Er-

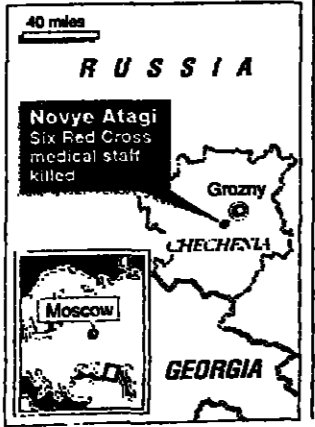
most certainly have to be abandoned. The "disappointed" DTI, however, admitted that a change of law might now be necessary. "All options will be considered, including the possibility of legislative change, and we will make an announcement as soon as possible," it stated. The former Guinness chairman's rights were breached by the use in Crown Court of evidence he had given on pain of imprisonment, the court ruled. "The right not to incriminate oneself lies at the heart of a fair procedure and applies to all types of criminal proceedings," the judges said. Their ruling came nearly 10 years after Mr Saunders was sacked as head of the drinks giant in the wake of an investigation by government inspectors into allegations of share-price rigging. But the judges threw out compensation claims totalling nearly £4.7 million, of which £1 million was demanded as recompense for the breach of Mr Saunders' rights and the resulting "anxiety, anguish and imprisonment". The court also cut Mr Saunders' expenses claim for the costs of going to Strasbourg from £336,460.75 to £75,000. Guinness revisited, page 12

Heritage chief censured

David Henke Westminster Correspondent

SENIOR Whitehall civil servant ran up hundreds of pounds of unauthorised expenses on a corporate charge card, got his employer to pay £4,500 for his old furniture and concealed details of a £161,000 advertising account, says a report published today. Chris Green, chief executive of English Heritage, who quit his job last July, is accused of a "clear failure in the proper conduct of public business" in running the £110 million-a-year agency. The criticisms come in a report by Sir John Bourn, the Comptroller and Auditor General. It reveals that Mr Green — alone among the agency's 1,360 staff — was awarded his

own corporate American Express card and ran up a £5,800 bill over his 16 months in the job. Most of the complaints were about Mr Green entertaining guests at between £22 and £50 a head, breaking the Whitehall guideline limit of £21 to £24 per person a meal. Mr Green inherited a fully furnished office which needed redecoration. But under a special deal he persuaded English Heritage to buy surplus furniture from his Edinburgh flat — which he was selling when he quit his job as chief executive of Scotrail — to refurbish his office. He refused £3,762.50 but accepted a revised offer of £4,431. But the main dispute was over a £161,000 advertising contract to attract tourists to English Heritage sites, launched on the London Underground. Mr Green paid



Novye Atagi hospital, which opened in September to deal with the casualties of the retaking of Grozny by the separatist army, is under the control of a Chechen local commander, Ali Hajiev Shankan. He had been used by the Red Cross as an intermediary when one of their staff was kidnapped a month ago. The villagers of Novye Atagi gathered to pay their respects outside the hospital compound as the coffins were loaded on to trucks. Russian Kutayev, a Chechen government minister, said the killings were "an intentional and planned provocation aimed at felling" the elections. The Russian government made its ritual condemnation. Viktor Chernomyrdin, the prime minister, said it was a "cruel and senseless" crime aimed at destabilising the region. But officials privately washed their hands of responsibility, saying that security in the region was now solely provided by the separatist coalition government of Aslan Maskhadov. A further sign that Chechnia was descending into anarchy was the continued refusal of a Chechen field commander, Salman Raduyev, to free 21 Russian policemen seized by his group last Saturday. The bearded commander, who masterminded the hostage-taking of 42 civilians on the Dagestan border last January, revelled in his power. "I have put my troops on red alert," he said outside his headquarters in Novye Gorodki. "If they [Russian or official Chechen forces] want to fight with me, let them come and we see who wins." A group of 80 fighters loyal to Gen Raduyev disarmed and seized the policemen from the city of Penza, central Russia, when they tried to stop his motorcade driving into Dagestan. Gen Raduyev had planned to attend a meeting of Chechens in Dagestan.

own corporate American Express card and ran up a £5,800 bill over his 16 months in the job. Most of the complaints were about Mr Green entertaining guests at between £22 and £50 a head, breaking the Whitehall guideline limit of £21 to £24 per person a meal. Mr Green inherited a fully furnished office which needed redecoration. But under a special deal he persuaded English Heritage to buy surplus furniture from his Edinburgh flat — which he was selling when he quit his job as chief executive of Scotrail — to refurbish his office. He refused £3,762.50 but accepted a revised offer of £4,431. But the main dispute was over a £161,000 advertising contract to attract tourists to English Heritage sites, launched on the London Underground. Mr Green paid

Aide gets \$3m for life with Clinton

Stephanopoulos memoirs test legendary loyalty to Clinton

Martin Walker in Washington

GEORGE Stephanopoulos, the White House political aide, has sealed a record-breaking \$3 million (about £1.8 million) contract for a book of memoirs of life with Bill Clinton on the campaign trail and in the Oval Office, which will test his legendary reticence and loyalty to the president. To recoup the highest sum paid for such an insider book and for which a ghost-writer has yet to be selected, the New York publishing house of Little Brown is touting the Stephanopoulos memoirs in the industry as the non-fiction version of the best-selling political novel Primary Colors. "I feel like I won the lottery," Mr Stephanopoulos

said as the news broke. "Now I have to do the work." His agent who negotiated the deal, the super-lawyer Bob Barnett, put a high-minded spin on the contract yesterday. He said the book "will have lasting significance for people who care about and study the presidency." Mr Stephanopoulos, the son of a Greek Orthodox priest, was also lined up as a television commentator for the ABC-TV network. The television contract, which is reputed to include a retainer of \$100,000 a year, has already aroused controversy. "He is one of the best-known and most articulate presidential advisers this country has ever seen," said Roone Arledge, presi-



George Stephanopoulos: 'I feel like I won the lottery'

dent of ABC News. "His vast knowledge of Washington politics and policy will be an enormous asset." The deal would appear to leave the brand-new millionaire with little time for his plan to help the Labour Party win the next General Election after he formally takes his leave of the White House at the end of this month. Mr Stephanopoulos, who was educated at Oxford, has already put his inner-city Washington apartment on the market to prepare for his move to New York to join the long line of former political insiders who are heading for a new life in the media. But the question of whether he tells all is already causing a stir, with the Wall Street Journal claiming yesterday that his ABC-TV job created "a question of journalistic ethics." "Mr Stephanopoulos' knowledge of events inside the current White House puts his fellow journalists at ABC in an untenable position," said an article on the editorial page of the Journal. "Either they ask him about things he likely won't talk about, or they stifle their journalistic instincts and don't ask questions that should be asked."

Advertisement for Fujitsu computers. Title: 'Something to appreciate'. Text: 'You only have to use a Fujitsu ErgoPro PC to appreciate the benefits of its ergonomic design and its superb manufactured quality. You only have to look at the next paragraph to appreciate our latest special offer prices.' Image: A Fujitsu ErgoPro PC setup with a monitor, keyboard, and mouse. Text: 'Optional 15" Display, ErgoArm, ErgoFoot and x105 keyboard'. Price: 'Special Offer Price £1199 incl. 14" display'. Specifications for e452/120: INTEL 120Mhz Pentium® Processor, 16MB EDO RAM max 128MB, 1.2GB E-IDE hard disk, 3 year warranty. Price: £879 incl. 14" display. Specifications for x453/133: INTEL 133Mhz Pentium® Processor, 16MB Synchronous DRAM max 128MB, 1.2GB E-IDE hard disk, Integrated 10/100Mbps Ethernet, 3 year warranty. Contact: Phone us now on 0345 123 555 for more details. FUJITSU PC • NOTEBOOKS • SERVERS.

Advertisement for a play. Text: 'Fresh-faced youths with greater physiques than acting ability perform lachrymose melodrama. Plucky lesbians achieve wholeness through mutual hair-combing and warm humour. Genre pieces abound. Gay theatre is dead'. Image: A stylized arrow pointing right. Text: 'Arts G2 page 12'.

Deals
Zairean
welcom
back
they
tion
DELL
01344

Schools and rugby officials ponder landmark ruling

Rugby referee pays for injury

Clare Dyer Legal Correspondent

RUGBY Union officials and school heads were last night considering the implications of a Court of Appeal ruling that a referee was to blame for spinal injuries that condemned a 17-year-old player to a wheelchair for life.



Michael Nolan, who 'fell below the standards of a reasonably competent referee' in the match which left Ben Smoldon confined to a wheelchair for life



'This judgment has made a significant advance in providing for the safety of players, particularly young players. It is hoped that those who control and administer the laws of the sport will remember the judge's words that the referee owes the players under his control a preventive mantle'

Terry Lee, solicitor

consented to the ordinary incidents of a game of rugby, but could not possibly be said to have consented to a breach of duty on the part of the official whose duty it was to apply the rules.

Neither Mr Nolan nor Mr Smoldon was in court yesterday. Mr Smoldon's solicitor, Terry Lee, said: "This judgment has made a significant advance in providing for the safety of players, particularly young players. It is hoped that those who control and administer the laws of the sport will remember the judge's words that the referee

owes the players under his control a 'preventive mantle'. Let us hope that this protective mantle is spread to reduce and eradicate the incidence of young people suffering severe spinal injuries while playing rugby."

ruling that he did not exercise reasonable care and skill in refereeing the scrums during the under-18s colts match in October 1991 between Sutton Coldfield and Burton on Trent. The case provoked fears that it would deter teachers from volunteering to referee school matches and make it more difficult for schools to get insurance. John

Sutton, general secretary of the Secondary Heads Association, said after the ruling that heads would want to ensure that all matches were controlled in future by qualified referees.

But Lord Bingham said that Mr Justice Curtis had stressed that his decision was based on the special facts of the case, particularly the un-

acceptable number of collapsed scrums - between 18 and 24 - that were allowed to occur. "He did not intend to open the door to a plethora of claims by players against referees, and it would be deplorable if that were the result," said Lord Bingham, sitting with Lord Justice Auld and Sir Brian Neill. Lord Bingham said Mr Smoldon's capacity for independent and active life had been "blighted in the flower of his youth".

Galleries and museums defeat Sharon Stone in making hearts throb

Maew Kennedy Heritage Correspondent

ROLL over Sharon Stone, here's something to make the heart beat faster and the pulses race: the British Dental Museum.

ously exciting, more exciting than watching Sharon Stone in Basic Instinct. Chelsea play Newcastle, video games, or even, astonishingly, watching Kenneth Clarke's Budget speech.

strapped to his chest, recording his normal heart rate and its response to stimuli like Ms Stone and Mr Clarke. The physical activity of visiting museums produced an average heart beat of 87, compared to a sedentary television watching average of 57, so the experiment plotted the leap in heart rate in direct response to an exotic museum display or a murder on film.

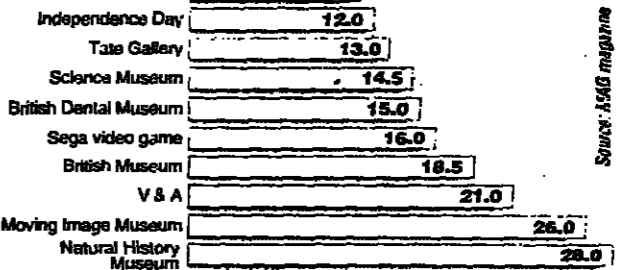
The X-certificate experience of the museums world is undoubtedly the Natural History Museum, specifically the Earthquake Experience in its new Earth Galleries, a re-creation of a small Japanese supermarket in the grip of the Kobe earthquake, where the whole room shakes and shudders violently around the

visitor. More than the earth moved. Nothing, not Ms Stone's missing underpinnings, not Sega video games, not even the shooting of Ian Beale on Eastenders, could compete: the earthquake provoked a heart-beat rise of 28, compared with a rise of 10 for Basic Instinct. Chelsea v Newcastle, at nine points, were not in the same league.

The surprise thriller - though fear may have been the key - was the British Dental Association museum, which scored 13, the same as the Tate Gallery.

The Museum of the Moving Image was paring on the heels of the Natural History, scoring 26, followed by the restored Raphael Cartoon gallery at the Victoria and Albert at 21 - but even an ancient erotic carving at the British Museum did better than Ms Stone, scoring 18.

What makes your pulse beat faster? Increase in heartbeats per minute



Jeremy Irons: 'It will probably cause a lot of fuss when it comes out so I'll keep a low profile'

Show Lolita or I'll quit UK, says Irons

Dan Gleister Arts Correspondent

IN JUNE, Jeremy Irons sounded like the model of restraint. "This film is about what happens when a man, who is only attracted to young girls, meets a young girl with no morals. It will probably cause a lot of fuss when it comes out so I suppose I'll keep a low profile then."

that it will not get a distributor to release it. If it does not find one, I will leave the country." The new film of Lolita by Adrian Lyne, director of Nine and A Half Weeks and Fatal Attraction, has had a troubled history even before its release.

The project lost Hollywood support when Oscar-winning producer Richard Zanuck pulled out before filming began. One studio executive was quoted as saying: "Paedophilia is a tough sell, and somehow Zanuck's name took away some of the taint."

money-spinning scheme dreamed up by Hollywood? The movie moguls have done a remake of Lolita - a tale of twisted love and a man's lust for a mere child.

Jury in Leah trial fails to agree

Kamran Ahmed

THE jury in the trial of Steven Packman, accused of being involved in the supply of ecstasy which killed Leah Betts, was dismissed yesterday after failing to reach a verdict.

an ecstasy tablet at her 18th birthday party in Latchingford, Essex. The Crown Prosecution Service will decide whether to apply for a retrial on Friday, when Mr Justice Kay will hear submissions from the prosecution and defence. Packman, aged 18, of Laindon, near Basildon, Essex, was accused of being involved in supplying Leah in November last year. Stephen Smith, aged 19, also of Laindon, has admitted the charge. He will be dealt with later. Leah fell into a coma after taking the ecstasy, which

caused a partial kidney failure. Her body could not cope with the water she was drinking. Her death sparked a media-led campaign against ecstasy, and led her parents to launch a nationwide effort to persuade teenagers not to take the drug. Leah's father, Paul Betts, said yesterday: "Of course we wanted this to come to an end here but we will now have to continue our wait. It is heartrending."

get this part of it out of the way before Christmas, but we know now we will have to go through it all again in the new year." The Packman family said in a statement made through defence counsel John Cooper: "The prosecution must consider what interest will be served by a retrial. Mr Packman has always said he is innocent of these charges and continues to say he is innocent. "He and his family go into Christmas determined that if there is to be another trial the truth is heard."

Using toes as fingers gives children new grip on life

Tim Radford Science Editor

THREE years ago Stacey Carter-Brooks of York wouldn't play with other children. When she did, she kept one hand concealed: two of her fingers were missing. Now, at 10, she has five fingers on each hand. She is, however, missing a second toe on each foot. Stacey is one of 40 children with congenital or accidental deformities of the hand whose lives have been made better by Simon Kay and his team of surgeons at St James's university hospital in Leeds.

David Evans of the Royal National Orthopaedic hospital. One quarter of all accidents at home or work involve hands. There are thought to be 50,000 operations to injured hands, and 75,000 "elective" operations to the hands or upper limbs in Britain each year. Yet Mr Evans said, there were probably 10 to 15 full-time hand surgeons in the country. He argued that there should be at least one in every hospital, working with a surgeon with a strong interest in the art. "We calculate we need at least 100 surgeons working with hands," he said. Operations to transfer toes to hands can take up to eight hours. Using microscopes, teams have to attach nerves, tendons and blood vessels. Some of the transplanted toes can provide a grip or pinching power to what might be an otherwise useless limb. "Transplanted toes grow normally; the joint movements are not as flexible as fingers would be, and the nails are smaller. But surprisingly they don't look as much like toes as one might expect," Mr Evans said.

Blair tells music press of 'free and frank debate' on Spice Girls

Stuart Mullar

WHEN the Spice Girls declared themselves the new Thatcherites and denounced Tony Blair's haircut, it looked as if the Labour leader's bid for pop respectability had failed. But now he has opened a new front in his fight to appeal to the youth generation by making a guest appearance in the Christmas edition of NME.

Tony's top 10

THE Ghost of Tom Joad - Bruce Springsteen Three Lions - The Lightning Seeds featuring David Baddiel and Frank Skinner Don't Look Back in Anger - Oasis Ironic - Alanis Morissette Halo Spaceboy - David Bowie and the Pet Shop Boys Say You'll be There - Spice Girls Ready or Not - Fugees A Winter Shade of Pale - Annie Lennox Angel - Simply Red Rotterdam - The Beautiful South

صحنه من الاله

No cheer for Hogg on beef ban

Stephen Bates in Brussels and Ewen MacAskill

DOUGLAS Hogg, the Agriculture Minister, failed to win any guarantees about an early lifting of the European union's export ban on British beef when he met fellow agriculture ministers in Brussels yesterday.

After Mr Hogg gave details of the revised cull of up to 100,000 extra cattle in silence, there were immediate warnings that the ban is unlikely to be relaxed before next summer, after the general election. Ivan Yates, the Irish farms minister chairing the agriculture ministers' council, told BBC radio that a lifting of the ban could not be predicted with certainty. He said: "We're talking about mid-year before perhaps the full inspection process could be complete and early decisions could be made around the mid-year of 1997."

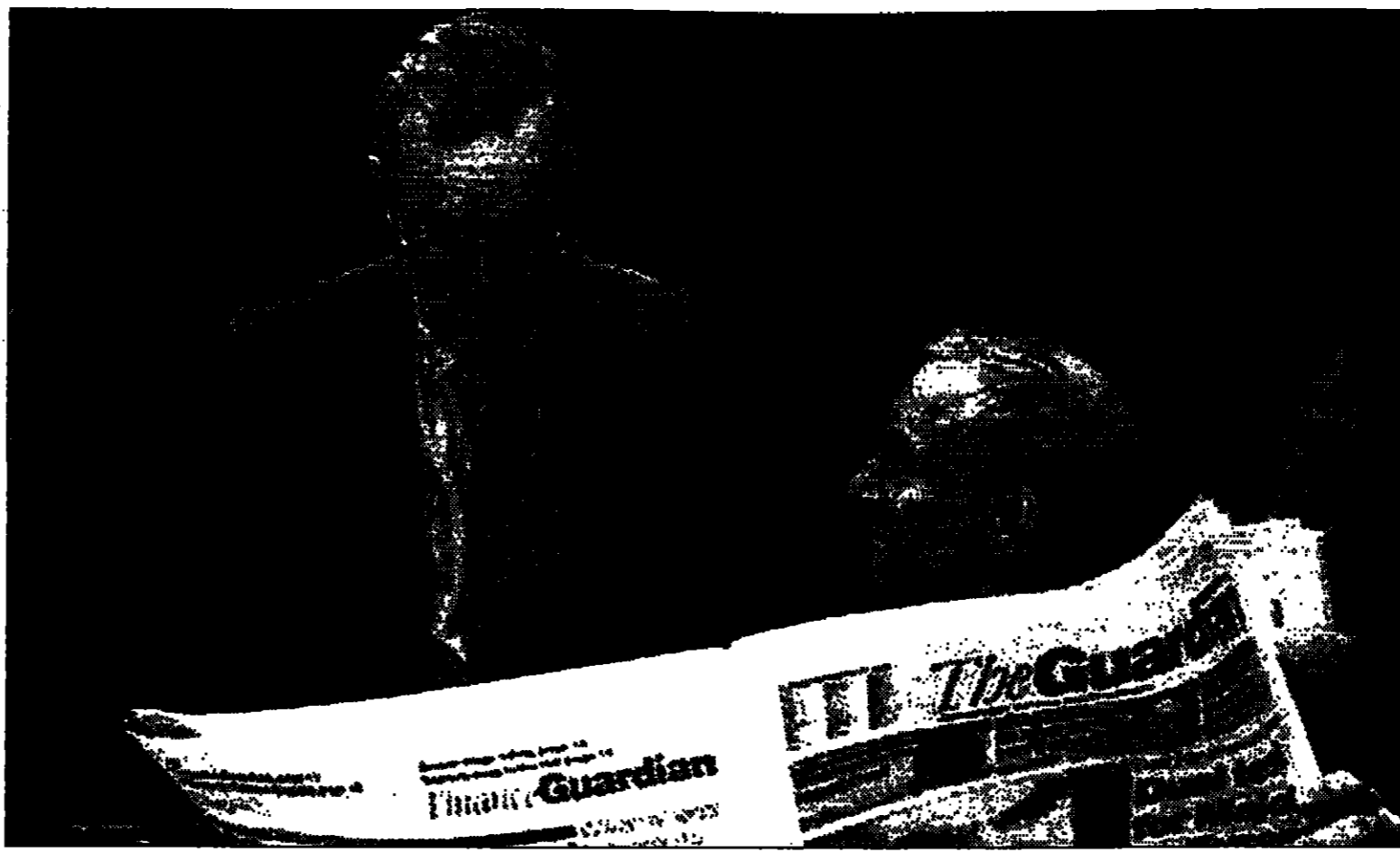
Earlier Mr Hogg claimed Britain had met four of the five conditions laid down at the Florence summit and should be treated sympathetically and rapidly by the EU. Other member states welcomed Britain's climbdown. But it is clear that the process of giving British herds a clean bill of health will be ponderous, with the Government required to produce proposals which will be studied before clearance by EU scientific and veterinary committees, followed by inspections to

check on the operation of the cull. Other agriculture ministers expressed reservations about how quickly the ban might be lifted, with Jozias Van Antwerpen, the Dutch agriculture minister, who will chair ministerial meetings in the new year, saying he anticipated talks continuing throughout the six months of his country's presidency.

Franz Fischler, the agriculture commissioner, told the French newspaper Le Monde in an interview: "It is clear that serious mistakes have been committed in Great Britain. These mistakes are not so much in the health measures... but in the way they have been carried out and checked."

In the Commons, John Major admitted he could not provide a timetable for lifting of the beef ban, after Tony Blair reminded him that he had said at the Florence summit in June it would be lifted by November, and had failed to deliver.

The Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, had to intervene during noisy exchanges when Mr Major used "unparliamentary" language to accuse Mr Blair of "misleading" the Commons. He then accused the Labour leader of "misunderstanding" the beef crisis. Mr Major said: "The beef ban will be lifted by our European partners and I cannot tell you precisely by what date that will be. I will be seeking the lifting of the ban progressively as soon as possible."



The Agriculture Minister, Douglas Hogg, (left), during a break in talks with fellow farm ministers in Brussels yesterday

Straw backs stalker bill

Ewen MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

LABOUR denied last night that it would do anything to delay the speedy progress of legislation through the Commons to tackle stalking.

The Protection From Harassment Bill is expected to complete its Commons stages today, move on to the Lords and become law early in the new year.

The shadow home secretary, Jack Straw, rejected reports that he would renege on a promise to help speed the bill through. At the start of yesterday's second reading debate, the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, said he was "mystified" that Labour had put down amendments which would "significantly weaken the effect" of the bill. Mr Straw replied: "We support this measure, although we wish to see it improved in committee."

An attempt by a Tory backbencher to bring back carrying in schools failed last night to pass its first Commons hurdle.

James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth) withdrew his amendment to the Government's Education Bill after it became clear it would not be passed by the Commons committee examining the measure. He said later he would bring back the amendment when the bill comes before the full House for its report stage in the new year.

Heseltine fails to back up claims of Labour leaks culture in Whitehall

Richard Norton-Taylor

THE deputy prime minister, Michael Heseltine, has been unable to substantiate claims that a spate of Whitehall leaks were the result of politically-motivated Labour supporters in the Civil Service. Mr Heseltine told MPs last week that a network of civil servants, including Labour

candidates, had disclosed damaging documents in what he called a "leak culture" in Whitehall. He told the Commons public service committee that he had prepared a "folder of the leaks" which he promised to pass to the MPs. The Guardian has learned that a Cabinet Office report sent to the committee yesterday — a week after Mr Heseltine made his allegations —

says there is no evidence to support his claims. It also suggests that despite Mr Heseltine's references to a new leak culture in the Civil Service, there has been no more leaks from Whitehall in recent weeks than there were in the mid-1980s. Mr Heseltine indicated last week that his folder included newspaper reports of a leaked Treasury document on the

future of the welfare state which also included the possibility of privatising roads. A member of the Treasury unit which wrote the report was quoted as having sought a nomination as a Labour candidate. The Cabinet Office report says that the official — Helen Goodman, who later withdrew her candidature — had been cleared of any involve-

ment in the leak. John Prescott, Labour's deputy leader, last night reminded Mr Heseltine that he had not replied to a challenge to name names and place his evidence immediately into the public domain. Sir Robin Butler, cabinet secretary and head of the Civil Service will appear before the public service committee today.

'Old Labour' MEP irks leadership

Stephen Bates on fierce party critic who is not just a far-left stereotype

HUGH Kerr, the 52-year-old Labour MEP now threatened with deselection, has been an irritant to the party leadership ever since he was elected to the European Parliament in 1994, following many years as a councillor at Harlow in Essex.

He is an almost archetypal Old Labour figure — a bearded, middle-aged, former lecturer in social policy at what is now North London University. The language he has used to attack the Labour leadership has been robust and unreconstructed too. Tony Blair — described ironically as the Great Leader — is frequently attacked for what he is doing to the party, but so are figures like Clare Short (for her "hatchet job" on Liz Davies, the Islington councillor prevented from being a parliamentary candidate) and Robin Cook.

"Is there no depth to which the Labour leadership will not stoop in its pursuit of power?" he asked in a letter to the Guardian last May.

"Whatever happened to the notion that political parties are meant to educate and lead public opinion and not reflect reaction, prejudice and chauvinism?" The issues have been key-stone ones, such as opposition to the reform of Clause 4. His local party at Harlow was criticised by Labour headquarters as "political dinosaurs" for voting against the change of the constitution on a show of hands rather than by consulting the full membership.

He also opposed Labour's consultation process on the party manifesto. Although almost all of the surrounding Westminster constituencies have Tory MPs, he won the European election for the Essex West and Hertfordshire East seat by a wafer-thin margin of 3,067 votes. Mr Kerr, Scots-born but LSE and Essex University-educated, admits he used to be a member of the Trotskyite International Socialists but has also been a Labour Party member since 1959. But he is not simply the unreconstructed old Trot that opponents like to claim. He is articulate and witty, a fan of opera and classical music, a director of Harlow Playhouse, a motorcycle fan (and mechanic) and collector of Scottish paintings.

Tory candidate and lobbyist faces US drink-drive charge

David Hencke Westminster Correspondent

FLAMBOYANT black Tory candidate and lobbyist, Derek Laud, could be facing prison rather than standing for Parliament next May following drink-driving charges being brought against him in the US. The fox-hunting, Monday Club member who is challenging Bernie Grant for the safe Labour seat of Tottenham in north London, has been asked to appear before East Hampton town justice court in Long Island on January 30 to answer charges of driving while intoxicated, driving while unlicensed and falling to keep to the right side of the road. The maximum sentence is one year's imprisonment.

The charges follow an accident at 3am last August when a car said to be driven by Mr Laud was in collision with another car which led to four people being taken to hospital.

According to the East Hampton Star, the local Long Island newspaper, Mr Laud was arrested and not released until he posted \$1,000 bail. Mr Laud, who runs the political division of Ludgate Laud, the lobbying company, advised Premier Club chairman, John Beckwith in his failed bid for Ministry of Defence homes this year. His company's consultants include Michael Colvin, Conservative MP for Romsey. Mr Laud is also a close friend of former Tory whip, Michael Brown, and of Christine and Neil Hamilton, MP — the latter under investigation for the "cash for questions" affair. Mr Laud has been desperate to get a seat. A Tory supporter for 20 years, he said recently: "I am coming to the end of my tether with this party. I believe that everyone should be selected on merit, but they blatantly aren't. You can have a brilliant CV but if you are black they won't trust you."

Dixons

FREE COLOUR PRINTER

WITH SELECTED PACKARD BELL PCs

OLIVETTI JP700 COLOUR INKJET PRINTER IN-STORE PRICE £159.99

PLUS 12 MONTHS INTEREST FREE OPTION* ON ALL PCs

MULTIMEDIA PENTIUM P100 PC FOR ONLY £949

ACER

ACROS PENTIUM® P100 MULTIMEDIA PC

- 100MHz Intel Pentium® processor.
- 8Mb RAM.
- 650Mb hard drive.
- 8-speed CD-ROM drive.
- LARGER STORES 9 MONTHS INTEREST FREE OPTION*

In-store Price £999. **£949**

CHOOSE TWO OF THESE FOUR TITLES FREE

FREE COLOUR PRINTER

WITH THESE APRICOT PCs

OLIVETTI JP170C In-store Price £199.99

apricot

MSS40/16Mb P120 PENTIUM® MULTIMEDIA PC

- 120MHz Intel Pentium® processor.
- 16Mb EDO RAM.
- 12Gb hard drive.
- 28.8 bps modem.
- 15" monitor.
- ATI 3D Page Graphics.
- 8-speed CD-ROM drive.

Was £1799. **£1699**

FREE COLOUR PRINTER

WITH THIS VOUCHER ON THESE COMPAQ MULTIMEDIA PCs.

COMPAQ

4118 P120 PENTIUM® MULTIMEDIA PC

- 120MHz Intel Pentium® processor.
- 16Mb EDO RAM (expandable to 72Mb).
- 12Gb hard drive.
- 8-speed CD-ROM.
- 33.6 bps fax/modem.

Was £1799. **£1599**

FREE WORKSTATION

(In-store Price £39.99) ON P133 AND FASTER INTEL PENTIUM® PCs

PACKARD BELL

9001S P120 PENTIUM® MULTIMEDIA PC

- 120MHz Intel Pentium® processor.
- 8Mb EDO RAM.
- 1Gb hard drive.
- 6-speed CD-ROM drive.
- Was £1499. **£1399**

FREE COLOUR PRINTER

WITH ALL PACKARD BELL PCs

PACKARD BELL

9002S P120 PENTIUM® MULTIMEDIA PC

- 120MHz Intel Pentium® processor.
- 8Mb EDO RAM.
- 12Gb hard drive.
- 8-speed CD-ROM drive.
- 28.8 bps fax/modem.
- One-touch buttons.
- Was £1599. **£1499**

FREE COLOUR PRINTER

WITH THIS VOUCHER ON THESE COMPAQ MULTIMEDIA PCs.

COMPAQ

4118 P120 PENTIUM® MULTIMEDIA PC

- 120MHz Intel Pentium® processor.
- 16Mb EDO RAM (expandable to 72Mb).
- 12Gb hard drive.
- 8-speed CD-ROM.
- 33.6 bps fax/modem.

Was £1799. **£1599**

FREE COLOUR PRINTER

WITH THIS VOUCHER ON THESE COMPAQ MULTIMEDIA PCs.

COMPAQ

4118 P120 PENTIUM® MULTIMEDIA PC

- 120MHz Intel Pentium® processor.
- 16Mb EDO RAM (expandable to 72Mb).
- 12Gb hard drive.
- 8-speed CD-ROM.
- 33.6 bps fax/modem.

Was £1799. **£1599**

IT'S A CRACKER

A Corby Trouser Press is an inspired Christmas gift. It makes both giver and receiver look good. Choose from a range of models and finishes starting from around £75.

CORBY TROUSER PRESS

ALSTON NEED - BENTLEY - BURTON - HARTIG - HOUSE OF FRASER - JOHN LEWIS PARTNERSHIP - SELFRIDGES - ON FOR OTHER STOCKISTS CALL FREE 0800 220 351

This judgment has made a significant advance in providing for the safety of players, particularly young players. It is hoped that those who control and administer the laws of the sport will remember the justice's words about the referee's powers under the control a preventive measure.

Israelis and Arafat await 'the explosion'

A bloody clash between the peace 'partners' seems certain, Shyam Bhatia in Jerusalem writes

F EARS are growing that a bloody confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians is inevitable, despite Benjamin Netanyahu's public commitment to pursue the peace process.

At closed-door briefings in the Israeli prime minister's office and among Yasser's Arafat's entourage, officials agree it is not whether but when the clash takes place.

"We're sitting on a powder keg," said an Israeli official. "There is no way to prevent the big explosion."

In 1997 a traffic accident in which four Arab labourers were crushed to death by an Israeli lorry sparked off widespread riots that developed into the intifada.

The West Bank and Gaza Strip once again represent a potential tinderbox. If anything, the political climate among the Palestinians is even more poisoned.

Since Mr Netanyahu's election, Israel's relationship with its Palestinian neighbours has deteriorated to a point that would have been inconceivable six months ago.

Mr Netanyahu's Likud Party believes that the West Bank, which it refers to by its biblical names of Judea and Samaria, is an integral part of Israel.

The Oslo peace pact, the party stalwarts argue, will eventually terminate Israel's presence in the West Bank and lead to the creation of another hostile Arab neighbour, called Palestine.

In recent months there have been almost daily confrontations between Jews and Arabs in the fields and villages away from the big urban centres of the West Bank.

In some instances Mr Arafat's ministers have personally led protest marches against Israel's policies, or lain down in front of bulldozers preparing sites for more Jewish homes.

Earlier this week, the Speaker of the Palestinian legislative council, Ahmed Qreia, responded to the Israeli government's decision to strengthen Jewish settlements with warning: "Never has the peace process been in such a critical situation."

Mr Qreia said the Palestinians would not hesitate to demand the return of former Arab cities like Heifa, Jaffa and Safed if the stalemate continued.

Palestinian officials complain most about the small-like progress of the talks on Hebron. For six months Israeli and Palestinian negotiators have been unable to reach an agreement that would allow the Israeli army to leave the city.

Mr Netanyahu's closest advisers say he missed an opportunity to ditch the Oslo deal after September's bloody clashes over the opening of the Hasmonaean tunnel in Jerusalem.

At last Friday's cabinet meeting in Jerusalem the Israeli government rejected Admiral Ayalon's warning that the government's policies were set on a collision course.

Adm Ayalon's report followed leaks by top Israeli officials that the Palestinian police had purchased anti-tank missiles, and that Mr Arafat was preparing an underground bunker for himself in Gaza City.

Palestinian officials claim that these leaks were intended to prepare the Israeli public for an "all-out war" against the Palestinians.

On Friday, the Palestinians have called for a massive public demonstration in Arab East Jerusalem to protest at Israel's decision to build 132 Jewish homes in the Arab enclave of Ras al Amoud.

The Palestinians have been encouraged by growing international pressure on Mr Netanyahu that included an appeal from three former United States secretaries of state, who criticised Israel's decision to expand settlements.

President Bill Clinton stepped up the pressure when he described Israel's settlement policy as an obstacle to peace, and urged a rapid agreement on Israel's withdrawal from Hebron.

Palestinian fears for peace were reflected in last Saturday's Al Ayyam newspaper, the official mouthpiece of the Palestinian Authority. Its verdict: "Oslo died the day Netanyahu was elected."

"We're sitting on a powder keg. There's no way to prevent the blast"

ground bunker for himself in Gaza City. Palestinian officials claim that these leaks were intended to prepare the Israeli public for an "all-out war" against the Palestinians.

On Friday, the Palestinians have called for a massive public demonstration in Arab East Jerusalem to protest at Israel's decision to build 132 Jewish homes in the Arab enclave of Ras al Amoud.

The Palestinians have been encouraged by growing international pressure on Mr Netanyahu that included an appeal from three former United States secretaries of state, who criticised Israel's decision to expand settlements.

President Bill Clinton stepped up the pressure when he described Israel's settlement policy as an obstacle to peace, and urged a rapid agreement on Israel's withdrawal from Hebron.

Palestinian fears for peace were reflected in last Saturday's Al Ayyam newspaper, the official mouthpiece of the Palestinian Authority. Its verdict: "Oslo died the day Netanyahu was elected."

"I'm about as insecure as you are. I'm exactly 39 steps — to use one of my favourite authors — from a double-decker bus, same as you."
Felix Dennis

G2 cover story

NOTICE OF VARIATION OF INTEREST RATES

With effect from 1 January 1997 Mortgage Rate will increase to 7.25% per annum for both existing and new borrowers.

The 100% Mortgage Rate will also increase to 7.75% per annum, along with the Royal Premier Mortgage Rate to 6.50%, with effect from this date.

Existing arrangements apply for Centralised Mortgage Services customers.

The Royal Bank of Scotland
The Royal Bank of Scotland plc.
Registered Office: 36 St. Andrew Square, Edinburgh EH2 2YB.
Registered in Scotland No. 90312.

Finn wins Santa war by a beard



Jon Henley in Rovaniemi, Finland

NORWAY is convinced he's Norwegian. "We've carried out extensive investigations, and there can be no doubt — he was born here," said Kjerseth Engen of the Norwegian Tourist Board. "It's because of Spitzbergen, you see. There's a direct link to the North Pole."

letters a year and 120,000 visitors. We should know, we market him in Japan." Greenland begs to differ: it receives grants from the Danish government to promote itself as his only home. Even the Icelanders get proprietorial about him, although they are hampered by an ancient Icelandic legend which says he comes in 13 incarnations, all with unpronounceable names.

But Arto Tuominen thinks they are all wrong. In the Great Nordic Santa War — waged with unlikely passion and even unlikelier sums of money by marketing men, foreign ministries, tourist boards, Santa villages and Santa post offices in five quiet and peace-loving countries — a clear victor has emerged. "Of course, it is a very competitive sector these days," said Mr Tuominen, managing director of Santa Claus Finland International Ltd. "But I think we can say that the number one position of the world's only genuine Santa —

Finland's — has strengthened substantially. You only have to look at the figures." Santa's main post office in the small town of Rovaniemi, the capital of Finnish Lapland, has received 700,000 letters this year, Mr Tuominen said — 300,000 more than last year, and they are still coming in at between 20,000 and 30,000 a day.

"We should hit a million by the end of the year," he said. "That'll be about twice as many as Norway, Sweden and Greenland combined. And it's not as if we go round the world telling people Santa lives in Finland — they just seem to know." Finland's Santa also gets almost twice as many visitors as his nearest rival in Drobak, outside Oslo. This year's celebrity guests — not too old to tell Santa what they really, really want — were the teen pop idols the Spice Girls. But each year more than 400,000 others make the pilgrimage to his Arctic Circle



Hot line to the North Pole: There's only one Santa, says the favourite in Rovaniemi village. spend freely in its shops, restaurants and reindeer-driving school or head into the frozen blue wilderness on a husky-dog safari.

lem here," Mr Tuominen said. "What we have is a serious supply problem." This week, the man at the centre of it all sat in a new and larger office, complete with viewing platform for timid guests, digital camera for instant sat-on-the-lap pictures, video-conferencing facilities and a volume titled *A Guide to the World's Chimneys*.

He was not interested in the Nordic Santa War. "You people only ever want the behind-the-mask stuff, and it's humbug," he said. In between a *doujour* to Antoine from Paris, a *kallimera* to Constantin from Greece, and a lot of yo-ho-hoing to 150 British tourists on a five-day Winter Wonderland-Search for Santa package with Cosmos. "Look, there's only one Santa, he's the one in children's hearts. It's not my business to go around breaking children's dreams." His postbag made his point. Many letters were a forthright demand for the

goodies. Warren, aged six, from Leytonstone, listed 38 presents including a Shaving Ken, a Robocup car, skates (size 13) and a laptop computer.

But Natty, from Thailand, wanted her 14 sick cats to get better. Yoshiko from Japan implored: "Please listen I'm falling in love now, but he thinks of me as just a friend. Santa Claus, please send me a miracle." Katerina from Moscow wanted nothing more than "to play snowballs together. Class 1C from Sofia, Bulgaria, said Santa Claus should know he was "the biggest magic for us, because you make us kind". Outside, stamping their feet in the snow to keep warm in -16C, the crowd of excited children were not interested in supply and demand. Matthew Weeks, aged nine, from Welwyn, spoke for them. This one, he said, was real. You could tell because he lived so far away, and had such a big beard.



Snow hits the hot asphalt as a construction crew pave a parking lot in Kokomo, Indiana, causing clouds of steam

Court heeds Pope's plea

Richard Thomas in Washington

THE United States supreme court yesterday ordered a last-minute stay of execution for a convicted Virginia murderer after a worldwide campaign for clemency led by the Pope.

Virginia's governor, George Allen, had earlier dismissed what he called "a write-in by the Pope", and reiterated his determination to punish "violent, premeditated, heinously vile crimes" by death.

Joseph O'Dell, who was convicted of rape and murder, had been scheduled to die by lethal injection last night.

But the supreme court said in a short statement that the execution should be delayed, pending a review of O'Dell's appeal, which presented new DNA-based evidence that blood on his clothes did not match the blood of the victim, a 44-year-old woman who was raped and killed in February 1985.

Legal experts said that a decision on O'Dell's case was now unlikely to be finalised before the New Year.

Mr Allen continued to insist yesterday that even the Pope had no sway over his determination to proceed with the execution, although he said that he would wait for clearer guidance from the supreme court justices.

"I give just as much attention to people who don't have the Pope writing in as to some body who does have the Pope writing in," Mr Allen had told a press conference held before the supreme court's intervention.

Front-page coverage of the impending execution in Italy prompted the Italian prime minister, Romano Prodi, to respond yesterday with a letter to Mr Allen seeking a suspension.

Interviews with Italian journalists in which O'Dell protested his innocence — as well as asking for a sample of his sperm to be frozen ahead of the execution — have also fuelled interest in the case.

Linda Thurston, director of Amnesty International's programme to abolish the death penalty, said: "We don't think the Vatican decided to intervene in this case, but it certainly helps. The court is supposed to be impartial, but politics inevitably plays a part."

But Amnesty was concerned that the international movement to save O'Dell — which was orchestrated by Virginia pressure groups over the Internet — should not pick and choose individual cases, given that 3,000 people are on death row in the US.

The Vatican said the pontiff's plea on behalf of O'Dell was a simple attempt to save a life, but the wider impact on the world's estimated 1 billion Catholics is potentially enormous, pressure groups said.

In his annual message of peace, released ahead of delivery on January 1, the Pope called yesterday for a new climate of forgiveness.

Although his remarks addressed the need to prevent worldwide conflicts, anti-death penalty campaigners seized on his comments as an implicit criticism of state-sponsored killing.

News in brief

Saddam's son on television

President Saddam Hussein's elder son Uday, who was shot and wounded last week, appeared on Iraqi television yesterday speaking at ease with a Qatari envoy and a reporter from the official news agency.

Border tightened

The biggest group of defectors to flee North Korea gave a first news conference in Seoul yesterday saying the impoverished country had nearly tripled guards along its borders with China and Russia to stop people escaping. — Reuter.

Lebed wins suit

The ousted Russian security chief, Alexander Lebed, won his libel suit in Moscow yesterday against the interior minister, Anatoly Kulikov, who had accused him of planning a coup, and was awarded the symbolic damages he sought: a single rooster. — AP.

Shuttle on beach

Two large chunks of the space shuttle Challenger washed up on the Florida shore yesterday nearly 11 years after it exploded, killing all seven crew members. — AP.

Cypriot doubts

A British proposal for ending the stalemate between Greeks and Turks on divided Cyprus did not go far enough to justify direct talks between the rival communities, Cyprus said yesterday. — Reuter.

Air crash toll 17

Seventeen people were killed when a military plane crashed while taking off from an airport near the city of Pskov, north-western Russia, yesterday. — Reuter.

Turkey steps up mafia inquiry

Chris Murtill in Ankara

TURKEY'S president, Suleyman Demirel, has ordered the acceleration of an official investigation into a case linking the state with organised crime, which is rapidly becoming the biggest political scandal in the history of the republic.

The media, helped by leaked documents, have driven the inquiry with daily revelations — described by the opposition as like 100 Watergates — surrounding a car crash.

The lorry driver who pulled out in front of a Mercedes travelling at an estimated 135mph near the town of Susurluk on November 3 is on trial for careless driving. But many Turks see him as a national hero for what he unwittingly helped uncover.

The car was ripped open as it slid under the lorry, killing a police academy chairman and a wanted gangster and his moll, and seriously injuring a senior politician. A cache of guns, silencers and surveillance equipment, and traces of cocaine, were found. The state was caught in *flagrante delicto* with organised crime.

Last week a prosecutor asked the justice ministry to lift the parliamentary immunity of Mehmet Agar, who was forced to resign as

ing a senior politician. A cache of guns, silencers and surveillance equipment, and traces of cocaine, were found. The state was caught in *flagrante delicto* with organised crime.

Last week a prosecutor asked the justice ministry to lift the parliamentary immunity of Mehmet Agar, who was forced to resign as

interior minister within days of the accident.

A police report said he had signed a gun licence found on the body of the dead gangster, Abdullah Catil. Mr Agar says the signature is a fake.

Catil was wanted for his torture and murder of seven leaving students in 1978 and was implicated in the 1981 assassination attempt on the Pope. In 1990 he was helped to escape from a Swiss prison

where he was being held for heroin smuggling.

According to leaked intelligence documents, he worked for the government, killing leftwing extremists and Kurdish separatists and taking part in a failed coup in Azerbaijan in 1994. A diplomatic passport and false identity cards were found in the car.

He was given a virtual state

directed by senior police were involved in killing, extortion and drug smuggling.

"Murderers are working for the state," Mr Demirel told the prime minister in a confidential letter. He has called a summit of party leaders on Sunday to discuss political corruption.

The new interior minister, Meral Akseener, has suspended the Istanbul police chief, his deputy, the head of special operations and three police officers during an investigation. The three officers allegedly confessed to killing a casino boss in July. They were merely reassigned as bodyguards to the MP who survived the car crash.

He is Sedat Bucak, a Kurdish warlord who receives 270,000 a month from the government to fight rival Kurdish separatists. Human rights activists say gangsters and Kurdish tribal chiefs controlled by the state could be responsible for more than 1,300 unsolved extrajudicial killings since 1992.

Saudis bar Britons from leaving

Ian Black Diplomatic Editor

SAUDI ARABIA is preventing at least 20 Britons from leaving the country because of an investigation into the murder of an Australian nurse at a Dhahran hospital.

The Britons, along with some 40 other Westerners, including Canadians, Australians and Americans, are being denied their passports by the authorities, sources at the King Fahd military hospital said last night. Many have been questioned by Saudi police.

But the Britons have not had any assistance from the Foreign Office: the British consul in Riyadh, Tim Lamb, was yesterday denied entry to the hospital after his Canadian and Australian counterparts visited.

tal said last night. Many have been questioned by Saudi police.

But the Britons have not had any assistance from the Foreign Office: the British consul in Riyadh, Tim Lamb, was yesterday denied entry to the hospital after his Canadian and Australian counterparts visited.

The Foreign Office said it was looking into the case.

"What concerns us is that we are being held against our will," complained one British employee who missed a flight home on Monday. "They are

refusing to release our passports. The chances of getting on another flight before Christmas are nil.

"The British authorities should be questioning why people are being held and why they're not being eliminated," from the investigation.

Yvonne Gilford, aged 56, was found dead in suspicious circumstances. Australian press reports have said she was suffocated, stabbed and hit with a hammer. Other terrified nurses locked themselves in their rooms.

Hospital employees were told last night that they were not to walk outside the compound after sundown, for fear the killer is still at large.

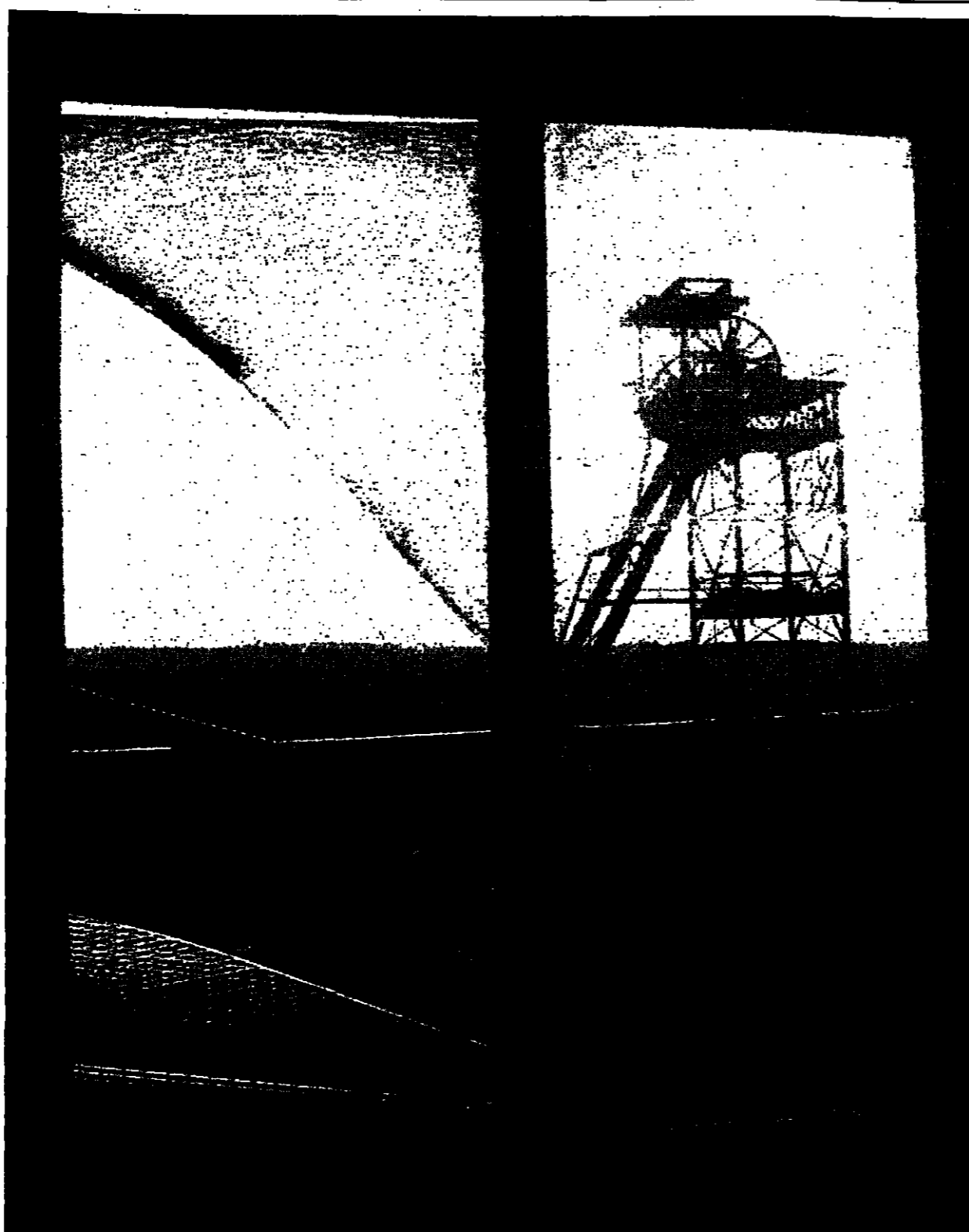
A Filipina nurse was stabbed to death in 1994 but that case was never solved.

Saudi Arabia is sensitive about dealing with Western expatriates because of the strict application of Islamic law. Relations with Britain were scarred in the late 1970s over the case of Helen Smith, a British nurse who was killed during a party in Jeddah.

سكنا من الامل



An alternative power structure has emerged in poverty stricken Western Siberia to co-ordinate protests and put pressure on Moscow. James Meek reports from the mining town of Prokopyevsk, where workers have not been paid for at least six months



A galloping programme of pit closures has sucked Prokopyevsk and its people dry PHOTOGRAPHS: A. REBER

'Town of slaves' seeks salvation

"DON'T like coming here," said Sergei as the car dipped into the hollows of the town, and dark hunched figures in shabby coats lumbered between embankments of snow like Lowry figures on white paper. "This is a town of slaves." If Sergei, making a good living as a black-market metals trader and paying taxes only to the mob, is troubled by anything, it should be by the town of Prokopyevsk. While Russia's new rich has grown, the mining community of a quarter of a million people has been abandoned to fend for itself in the frozen expanse of Siberia amid ruthless and chaotic pending cuts and pit closures. But its desperate, unpaid citizens are not going quietly. In a move reminiscent of the creation of workers' and soldiers' soviets which preceded the 1917 revolution, they have set up a "salvation committee" to co-ordinate protests and take the initiative from the ineffectual local authorities. It's like Lenin said: if the authorities can't govern in a new way, and the masses do not want to live in the old, a third force appears, said Valery Zuyev, aged 42, a mine electrician who heads the salvation committee. The committee movement, which began in September, has spread to other towns in the Kuzbass region. There have been calls to buy weapons and Moscow is worried. Unlike the strikes by unpaid miners and teachers, the committees unite workers from all sectors. "If they drive you into a



Unpaid Siberian miners are turning to new 'salvation committees' instead of ineffective strikes

corner, if your children are hungry, if the constitution isn't respected, the only thing is to demand the government be changed," said Mr Zuyev. "If you can't achieve that peacefully, you do it by force." The government's failure to collect taxes, the chronic chain of debt between mines, railways and metal and power plants, and a galloping programme of pit closures, teachers, doctors and local government officials have not been paid since May or June. Pensions have not been paid since August. People live by

committee was a presidential decree allowing the local coal company to rid itself of the financial burden of maintaining the town's housing stock, and its central-heating system, by transferring them to the local authority. No one worked out how, with winter closing in, the mayor was to maintain and heat tens of thousands of state flats. He begged for government money; he was ignored. Temperatures in the Kuzbass can reach -50C. "The boilers weren't ready for winter," said Mr Zuyev. "In our conditions it means death. We demonstrated, we blocked the railways and the roads. What can you do when your constitutional right to life is violated?" Alexander Prokudin, Prokopyevsk's acting mayor, said the salvation committee had made Moscow take notice of the area's plight - proved last week when the deputy prime minister, Vladimir Potanin, paid a flying visit. Even Western advisers who have spent years prodding the Russian government to restructure the coal industry and close loss-making pits are disturbed. "The restructuring in the past five years has been massive, faster than in any other country," said one. "But it's not as socially responsible as it should be." The Kuzbass - once the seat of militant support for Boris Yeltsin - has turned into a communist stronghold. It voted overwhelmingly for the Communist Party candidate, Gennady Zyuganov, in presidential elections this year. Yet Prokopyevsk's relationship with the Communists is ambivalent.

Its member of parliament, Nina Ostalina, is a Communist and a member of the town salvation committee. She opposes strikes and sees the salvation committees mainly as a way to force the region's despotic Yeltsin-appointed governor, Mikhail Kisilyuk, to hold local elections. "The people of Prokopyevsk feel that their lives are threatened, and are struggling to understand why. One salvation committee member, Oleg Khromin, a hospital therapist, digs into his briefcase to produce a document purporting to be a secret speech by the United States president, Bill Clinton, in which he outlines plans for world domination, including the destruction of the Russian coal industry. "We've demanded and demanded and our demands have not been fulfilled," said Mr Khromin. "Now we are preparing political demands, to bring to an end this predatory Yeltsin regime. If they don't listen, maybe we'll have to resort to weapons." Yet there is wariness of bloodshed. Nine young men have already returned to Prokopyevsk in zinc coffins from Chechnya. Younger people feel the town is doomed and see the best chance in escape. "The town is dying - there's nothing for us young people to do here," said Oleg. "I am not as dry and I am more sensitive than the newspapers make me out. I am not a monster of indifference... I am hurt by a feeling of injustice." Excusing himself for not being a superhero, Mr Juppé accepts responsibility for failed job-creation programmes, saying he considers unemployment "my cross". The book was followed up by radio and television interviews. But Le Monde yesterday suggested that Mr Juppé was wasting his time. "The electorate may be touched, but it won't make them forget the difficulties of their daily lives," the newspaper said. "Mr Juppé says that unemployment is his cross but a book is not going to change anything."

Süssmuth 'used official jets for private pleasure'

German Speaker accused of sleaze

GERMANY'S parliamentary speaker, Rita Süssmuth, struggled to contain the fallout from embarrassing sleaze allegations yesterday, as taxpayers, the media and the opposition demanded answers to claims that she used official transport for her private pleasures. The Bonn prosecutor's office confirmed that it was investigating allegations that the most prominent woman in German politics had repeatedly exploited the availability of Luftwaffe jets for government and state functions to visit her daughter in Zürich. Through her spokesman, Mrs Süssmuth insisted she had never used the facility for private purposes and an illegal settlement against the Bild am Sonntag newspaper, the first to report the allegations. Its editor responded angrily to the threat, and Dieter Lat, vice-president of the German taxpayers' federation, who is leading the allegations against Mrs Süssmuth, said he was confident that his information was accurate. Bild quoted a Zürich airport employee as saying: "Mrs Süssmuth arrives here often to visit her daughter who lives in Switzerland. She comes on a Bundeswehr [armed forces] plane 90 per cent of the time." Two years ago Mrs Süssmuth's husband had to pay a \$2,000 fine to halt court proceedings after it became known that he had used an official car and chauffeur from the parliamentary pool to take the daughter to Switzerland where she is a stu-



Rita Süssmuth: tops popularity polls and is regarded as the nation's conscience

opposed to party contributions - need only be declared to the Speaker, and not publicly, if they exceed \$4,000 a year from a single donor. MPs' earnings from speaking or writing engagements need to be declared, again only to the Speaker, once they exceed \$12,000 a year. The Speaker is authorised to investigate MPs' conduct, without disclosing that any inquiry is being carried out. The German military's fleet of jets and helicopters are available for the use of the chancellor, the president, cabinet members, the Speaker and parliamentary caucus leaders, but only on official business. Mrs Süssmuth's spokesman said that the defence ministry checks that all requests for official transport meet the guidelines. But a defence ministry spokesman said that requests for official jets are taken on trust provided the official in question, as in Mrs Süssmuth's case, is entitled to the privilege. She is accused of using official jets 11 times to visit Switzerland in the past two years, and also of using the military to ferry her to Holland on holiday. Three weeks ago, Mrs Süssmuth took an official jet to southern Germany to deliver university lectures on "state responsibility and private responsibility". Using an official military aircraft on a return trip to Zürich is reckoned to cost \$12,000, about 25 times the price of a Luftwaffe ticket. In 1991, Chancellor Kohl and his wife Hannelore used the privileged air service on an emergency trip to Italy where their son had been injured in a car accident. Mr Kohl paid \$28,000 for the private use of the service. "Donations" to MPs - as

News in brief

Strikers bring Athens to a halt in austerity budget protest

THOUSANDS of strikers marched through the Greek capital yesterday before parliament began debating the government's austerity budget, writes Helena Smith in Athens. Civil servants, doctors and teachers walked off the job, joining strikes by Greek seamen and diplomats. The protests plunged the

country further into crisis as it entered its third week of a farmers' rail and road blockade. Bracing themselves for a showdown with the government, the farmers announced they would bring their self-proclaimed "holy war" against the tax-heavy budget to Athens with a demonstration outside parliament

tomorrow. "The government's got to understand that we're willing to stay here throughout the holidays," said a cotton grower guarding a roadblock outside Larissa, where the revolt is being coordinated. "We wouldn't be able to face our families if we returned to our villages empty-handed." The blockade, which has

cut Greece in half, has wrought unprecedented damage to the economy, with losses of more than \$442 million. Farmers say the budget, an effort to cut the deficit linked to the planned European single currency, expected too many sacrifices from Greeks who have seen their disposable incomes drop in recent years.

Nuclear cargo memo leaked

CONFIDENTIAL briefing papers giving details of the sailing dates and shipmen routes of high-level nuclear waste from France to Japan have been leaked to Greenpeace, writes Paul Brown. The papers show that the British ship the Pacific Teal will leave Cherbourg on January 16 and sail via the Cape of Good Hope, the East of Australia and the South Pacific to Mitsui Ogasawara in Japan. France had intended to keep the route and date secret to avoid demonstrations and possible terrorism. Several countries have banned the ship carrying glassified waste from entering their territorial waters, and for that reason it avoids the Panama Canal. The French government memo to its embassies suggests states involved in the ship's routing should be told secretly of the plans on December 23, with other countries told in January, a few days before the sailing.

Borneo dam given go-ahead despite risk to environment

MALAYSIA'S government yesterday gave permission for work to begin on the construction of a dam that critics say will flood thousands of acres of rain forest on Borneo island. The dam in Sarawak state, which will be run by Bakun Hydroelectric Corporation, is expected to generate 2,400 megawatts of electricity, and is scheduled to start operating on October 31, 2002. Construction work was

Mother gets mummy treatment as Israel bars deep-freeze

THEY had hoped to freeze their mother's body until the day medical technology could bring her back to life. But after 14 days of court hearings, Moshe and Rachel Beeri agreed yesterday to mummify her instead. Esther Beeri died two weeks ago of natural causes, aged 70. Her children proposed to mummify her - a move approved by the Tel Aviv district court

yesterday - after realising it was impossible in Israel to keep the body on ice. "They were very sad," their attorney, Nachshon Fisher, said. "They accepted this only because there was no other choice." The Israeli burial society and health ministry opposed the request to keep the body at home in a freezer. Instead, it will be preserved in oil and wrapped in thick nylon before burial. - AP.

France's PM publishes and promises to do better next year

Paul Webster in Paris

WHEN a prime minister slumps in opinion polls, faces internal party dissent, becomes the butt of cartoonists, what can he do except admit that he has made a mess of things and promise to do better in the New Year? Some leaders may not agree with the method, but Alain Juppé, the most unpopular French prime minister for nearly 40 years, yesterday released a book which amounts to an apology for his 20 months in power. His term has been marked by street protests, rising unemployment and criticism from within the divided Gaullist-RPR, of which he is chairman. In his book, called "Between Ourselves", Mr Juppé says that someone has to do a dirty work of prime minister. "Only a year and a half ago I went to the prime minister's office full of dynamism, mandated by public opinion which saw me as the ideal prime minister," he writes. "Today I am beating all the records of unpopularity." Mr Juppé went to the seaside to write the book and consider why pundits saw him as a distant and arrogant technocrat. "I am not as dry and I am more sensitive than the newspapers make me out. I am not a monster of indifference... I am hurt by a feeling of injustice." Excusing himself for not being a superhero, Mr Juppé accepts responsibility for failed job-creation programmes, saying he considers unemployment "my cross". The book was followed up by radio and television interviews. But Le Monde yesterday suggested that Mr Juppé was wasting his time. "The electorate may be touched, but it won't make them forget the difficulties of their daily lives," the newspaper said. "Mr Juppé says that unemployment is his cross but a book is not going to change anything."

Serbs find it's good to walk

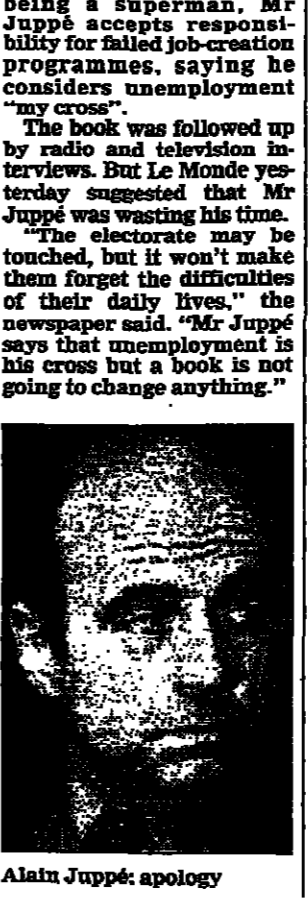
The daily protest marches are a form of group therapy, Julian Borger in Belgrade writes

SERBS are finding that a brisk walk after lunch can do wonders for their country's health. Their daily mass stroll to protest against government election-rigging has lent new meaning to the term "afternoon constitutional". Last weekend, 250,000 people took part in a demonstration in Belgrade - an eighth of the city's population. And the habit has spread to 30 other cities and towns. Students stage walks between the main industrial centres to bind the movement together. The marches are not only opening cracks in President Slobodan Milosevic's monolithic regime, but are fast becoming an alternative lifestyle - even group therapy. For many, the four-mile walk through Belgrade's city centre has become routine. They bring their children, their in-laws, their dogs. They shout, blow whistles and honk hooters. Families living along the route drum their feet on saucers on the balconies. So if Mr Milosevic is waiting for the protest movement to die a natural death, he may have a long wait. After war, sanctions and hyper-inflation, this is more fun than most Serbs have had in years. Sonja Biserko, a human rights activist at the Helsinki Committee in Belgrade, said: "In this whole atmosphere of depression, apathy, this protest gives people the feeling that something can be done. It's as much social and psychological as political." Doctors predict beneficial effects for a society which smokes too much, drinks too much coffee, and has been in danger of losing its sense of purpose in Mr Milosevic's no-hope economy, where most of the workforce is unemployed or paid a pittance in factories. "This is a kind of collective therapy," said Zarko Korac, a professor of psychology at Belgrade University. "The marches liberate people from fear, which has been internalised, and from being incapable of expressing their anger. It's symbolic that people are using whistles, shouting. They are breathing freely once again. It's a catharsis." Dragan Dzeric, aged 48, has left his barber shop early to join the marches since they began on November 18 - the day after rigged local elections. He says it is worth the \$15 a day in lost earnings. "The first few days I was exhausted, but now I've lost some weight, and I feel I could walk for ever," he said. "I'm amazed at how the old people

and the invalids keep going." Mr Dzeric's three-year-old daughter Milica was waving a Yugoslav flag. He also marches with his former wife. He said: "We were already on good terms, but these marches bring everybody together even more." He believes the protests will continue through winter if necessary. "I've already bought my rubber boots and woollen socks." Ojap Knezevic, a retired local government clerk aged 56, said: "It has made life more exciting. Everybody is happier, and it has brought Belgrade together." She met her local grocer, Dragan Divac, in the crowd that assembled in the offices of the Zajedno (Together) opposition coalition, and they now march together. Mr Divac goes to work at 5.30am, so that he can knock off in time. Asked how long he could keep it up, he nodded.

It's symbolic that people are using whistles, shouting. They are breathing freely once again. It's a catharsis'

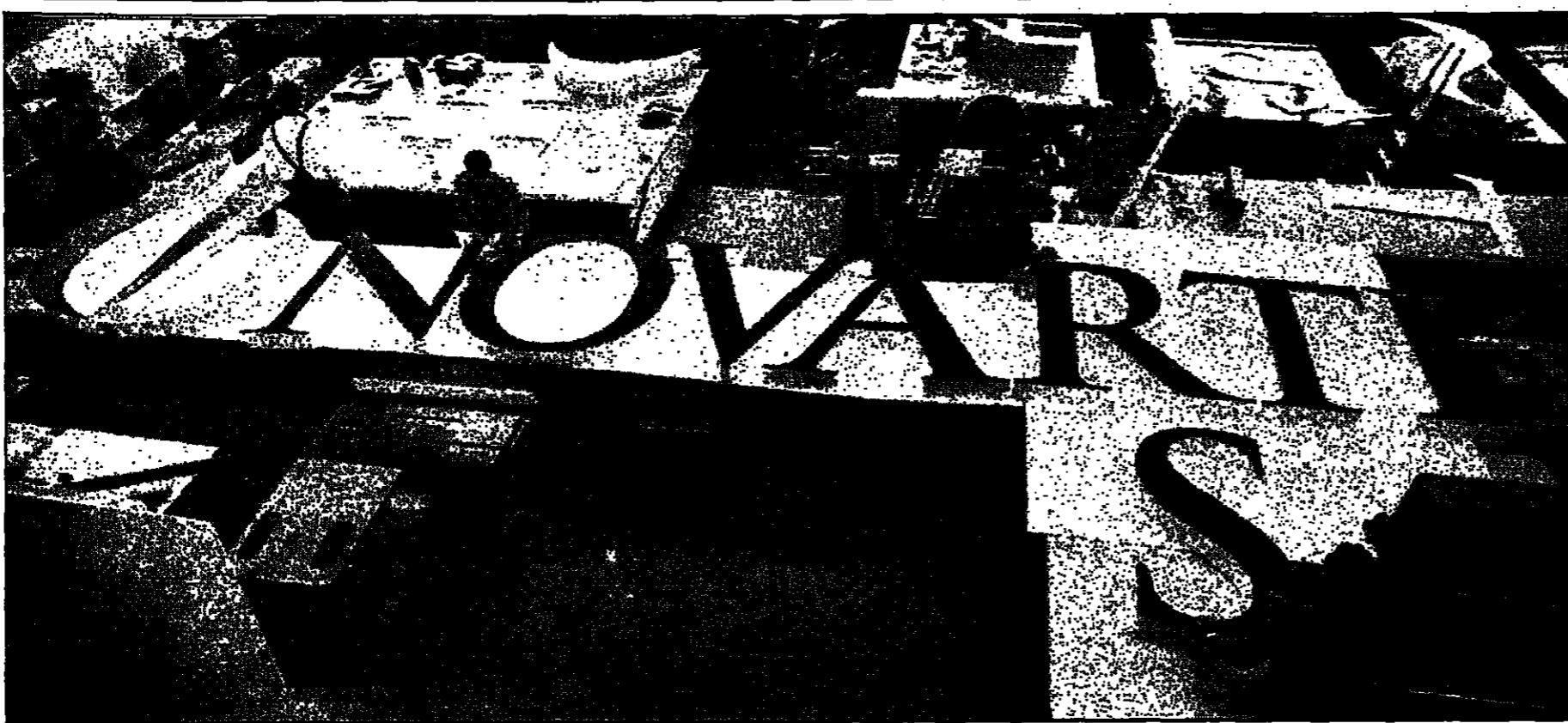
towards some government buildings and said: "One day longer than them." A few rows ahead, Ljiljana Tomic marches with her husband and four children. She said: "Whatever happens, they will have something to be proud of when they're older. It will show we are peaceful people. We didn't want the war. It was our government that was responsible." Many demonstrators insist that, although they consider themselves patriots, they are steadfastly anti-war. Yet anti-war protests during the Croatian and Bosnian conflicts were they in comparison to today's civil rights campaign. Mirjana Botic-Mojislovic, journalist and commentator, said one buried factor driving the protests is a sense of guilt that more people could have done more to stop the killing. "People realised they should have reacted when we [Milosevic] started war. We didn't have adequate reactions. Everyone feels they have to pay a personal price for that." President Milosevic, in his first meeting with protesters, said yesterday that his main task was to respect the will of the people and enforce the rule of law. According to the official Tanjug news agency, he told students: "A foreign hand shall not rule Serbia. We are our own masters and we must resolve our problems within our institutions."



Alain Juppé: apology

Financial Editor: Alex Brummer
Telephone: 0171-239-9610
Fax: 0171-833-4456

Finance Guardian



Workers in Aesch, near Basel in Switzerland, assemble a neon sign for Novartis, the creation of a £21 billion merger between Ciba-Geigy and Sandoz, which yesterday received its long-awaited US approval. The merger will create the world's second-largest drug company behind Glaxo Wellcome and lead to loss of 10,000 jobs. PHOTOGRAPH: ERWIN ZANDEN

Treasury committee exposes weaknesses in banking supervision and threatens Old Lady's powers

Bank berated over Barings



Rebecca Smithers
Political Correspondent

AN INFLUENTIAL committee of MPs yesterday launched a highly critical attack on the Bank of England's handling of the collapse of the merchant bank Barings, even suggesting that it may have to be stripped of one of its key roles — supervision of the British banking industry.

The report from the all-party Treasury select committee also recommends that ministerial responsibility for all aspects of financial regulation and supervision — including that of the insurance industry — should be switched to the Treasury, "at the earliest opportunity". This would replace what the MPs consider to be the unsatisfactory arrangement whereby responsibility for the financial sector is split be-

tween the Department of Trade and Industry and the Treasury.

The report underlines the Bank's difficulty in supervising banks like Barings, as they expand from traditional merchant banking activities into volatile international security markets.

"The Barings case illustrated considerable weaknesses in the Bank's supervisory regime — in areas such as the evaluation of internal controls at banks, the internal communication at the Bank itself and the application of existing Bank rules," it said.

It acknowledges "the pace of change" within the financial services industry, both in London and in the increasingly complex international environment. For this reason, there should be better contact between the international regulators.

"As UK regulators have pointed out, there are clearly

improvements in relationships and communication channels between regulators still to be made at an international level. Unfortunately, it appears that it is not yet the first instinct of all regulators who have a concern about an institution to contact the other regulators involved and not just the institution itself," the report said.

The MPs' conclusions are made nearly two years after Barings — Britain's oldest merchant bank — collapsed with losses of more than £800 million, in the wake of the unauthorised derivatives dealings by its Singapore-based trader, Nick Leeson.

The committee has been taking evidence from regulators and bankers throughout the world.

Since the Barings collapse, the Bank of England has undergone a major shake-up of its supervision and surveillance division, spearheaded by executive director Michael

Foot. "We recognise and welcome the Bank's current attempts to clarify the framework for its judgmental approach to supervision and to ensure that the type of laxity of management illustrated at Barings could not still go undetected under the new regime," commented the MPs.

But they conclude that the Bank of England needs to demonstrate that it is able to separate its supervisory activities from its other functions "and avoid any possible weakening of its regulatory effectiveness due to its proximity to the day-to-day banking market."

"Otherwise it may be that, in order to bring about the necessary cultural change, banking supervision will have to be taken away from the Bank of England."

The Bank of England is also singled out for placing too much confidence in the word of senior management at Bar-

ings, which meant that it failed to identify the problems earlier.

"Given that the controls within Barings have subsequently been exposed as woefully inadequate, this must raise critical questions over the way the Bank performs its supervision and the way it evaluates the banks for which it is responsible," the report says.

The Government is strongly averse to the concept of an independent banking supervisory authority. Labour, while broadly sympathetic to the idea, insists that any decision will be taken until it has completed a broader City debate on the regulation of financial services.

Last night a spokesman for the Bank of England said: "The report identifies some of the dilemmas that face regulators and we welcome it as a constructive contribution to the debate."

Notebook

Equal before the company law



Mark Milner

NEVITABLY there will be those who will find it irritating to have Ernest Saunders again parading his claims of innocence in the Guinness affair. There will be others who will be concerned that Mr Saunders is able to do so on the back of another European ruling, this time from the Court of Human Rights.

The first thing to note is the court's argument that, at Mr Saunders's trial, the evidence obtained by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors, in breach of Mr Saunders's right to silence, would help its case.

That is some way from Mr Saunders's claim that without that evidence he would not have been convicted. In this context it is worth remembering that the court decided not to award Mr Saunders compensation and ruled that its findings alone constituted "sufficient just satisfaction".

The second thing is that the court's decision must be the right one. There cannot be an argument that someone suspected of offences under the Companies Act should in some way have fewer rights than another person allegedly in contravention of another part of the legal code.

It is simply not enough to suggest that, for example, corporate fraud is more complex than other crimes and that those suspected of such frauds should therefore be treated differently.

As a result of the court ruling, the legal authorities in Britain will have to look at the framework of corporate regulation and related criminal prosecutions. Presumably the DTI will still be able to appoint inspectors, though any evidence resulting from their enquiries is unlikely to be used in subsequent criminal proceedings without running into the Saunders defence.

In an immediate, practical, terms the more difficult issue, however, is likely to be whether or not the decision will have implications for the way in which the Serious Fraud Office carries out its investigations. The SFO believes its procedures will not have to change. Others are less sure.

There may well be wider implications. Yesterday's ruling is likely to reopen the long-running debate into how the legal system copes with complex white collar offences. Are they best subject to the full majesty of the criminal law or a less formal regime — regulators, expert tribunals, fines, suspension or expulsion from financial or corporate posts — which would also carry a lesser burden of proof?

The latter approach has its attractions. It would certainly be more pragmatic and might

Supervisory snag

THE Treasury Select committee report into the regulatory aspects of the collapse of Barings is clearly a yellow card for the Bank of England. The committee has effectively put it on notice that another fiasco and the pressure to remove the Bank's supervisory role will be well high irresistible.

The committee is concerned that the nature of the Bank's operations means that its "cheer leader" to the City it may be too close to the institutions that it is meant to supervise. It is also worried that, in addition to the inherent risk of "regulatory capture", the Bank has actually been very slow in learning the lessons of past regulatory imperfections, despite promises to sharpen up its act.

The Bank itself argues that there is no inherent contradiction between its place as the UK's central bank with all the implications for its position within the UK banking system that entails, and its supervisory role. Indeed, the Bank argues that the knowledge and expertise gained in one area helps it carry out its functions in the other.

Clearly that is an argument which must carry some weight. But it is not sufficient to carry the day completely. A supervisory body, separate from the Bank of England, would still be able to recruit those with a close practical knowledge of the institutions being supervised while the Bank itself, if stripped of its regulatory role, would be able to recruit staff with an understanding of supervisory issues.

The DTI will still be able to appoint inspectors, though any evidence resulting from their enquiries is unlikely to be used in subsequent criminal proceedings without running into the Saunders defence.

In an immediate, practical, terms the more difficult issue, however, is likely to be whether or not the decision will have implications for the way in which the Serious Fraud Office carries out its investigations. The SFO believes its procedures will not have to change. Others are less sure.

There may well be wider implications. Yesterday's ruling is likely to reopen the long-running debate into how the legal system copes with complex white collar offences. Are they best subject to the full majesty of the criminal law or a less formal regime — regulators, expert tribunals, fines, suspension or expulsion from financial or corporate posts — which would also carry a lesser burden of proof?

The latter approach has its attractions. It would certainly be more pragmatic and might

BT confronts OfTel in court

Nicholas Bamister
Technology Editor

DON Cruickshank, director-general of OfTel, acted unlawfully when he included a catch-all fair trading clause in British Telecom's licence, lawyers for the telecom group argued in the High Court yesterday.

BT and OfTel, the industry regulator, have clashed repeatedly in recent months over whether Mr Cruickshank has the authority to extend his powers to include a clause prohibiting any form of anti-competitive behaviour by BT.

OfTel insisted that new fair

trading powers were essential to offset a significant deregulation of the group's activities. But BT claimed that Mr Cruickshank had exceeded his authority, and sought judicial review to settle the issue.

Roger Henderson, QC for BT, said the new clause was unlawful since it would sweep aside sections of the 1984 Telecommunications Act and would lead to conflict between OfTel and the Office of Fair Trading.

"There will be two policemen with different roles and laws to apply to the same set of circumstances," he told the High Court.

He said a licence should

alert people to what was a proper act and to where they stood at risk, "to where this licence bites or does not bite". But this was not so in the case of the new clause which was far too broad in its scope.

He told Lord Justice Phillips and Mr Justice Hooper that it was irrelevant that BT had accepted the controversial clause, together with other licence amendments, rather than reject the proposals and trigger a Monopolies Commission inquiry.

If Mr Cruickshank had acted unlawfully, BT was not in a position to make his action lawful "even if it was the most desirable thing in the world", he said.

Mr Henderson said Parliament did not intend giving Mr Cruickshank the authority to expand his powers to become a full blooded fair trading authority, with the combined roles of policeman, judge and jury.

There were parallels in the 1973 and 1980 Fair Trading Acts in which Parliament had specifically prevented the Director-General of Fair Trading from taking such action.

He insisted that Mr Cruickshank's proposal to set up an advisory committee was also irrelevant because at the end of the day the law laid down that the OfTel director general had to take any decisions.

The review continues.

Minister to offer building societies extra protection

Richard Miles

THE Government is expected to offer building societies an extra safeguard against hostile takeovers when it publishes the draft Building Societies Bill today.

Treasury minister Angela Knight hopes the additional protection will placate the three building societies — Alliance & Leicester, Watney and Northern Rock — which have threatened to shelve their stock market flotations and halt the payment of some £7 billion in windfall bonuses.

But Ms Knight will refuse to back down on her proposal to waive the five-year statutory protection from predators enjoyed by any converting society under the 1986 Building Societies Act, should the new PLCs seek to acquire another financial institution.

The extra safeguard to be announced today is aimed at protecting a fledgling bank from a "small cabal" of its own shareholders who attempt to "bump" the former society into accepting a hostile takeover bid shortly after conversion.

Under earlier proposals, a group of shareholders owning 10 per cent or more of the stock could force the new PLC to waive its five-year protection.

The societies fear an institution will snap up 10 per cent of the stock within the first few days of flotation, force the waiver of protection and then launch a takeover bid.

Ms Knight proposes to tackle this by increasing the level of votes needed to enforce the waiver of protection. However, under

company law, shareholders with 10 per cent of stock will still be able to demand an extraordinary general meeting.

Whether the extra safeguard will be sufficient to deter the three building societies from carrying out their boycott remains questionable.

Yesterday, they indicated that a softening on the 20 per cent rule for shareholders would not be enough.

Andy Kulpers, assistant general manager of Northern Rock, said the society would welcome any move that would prevent a small group of shareholders holding the newly formed bank to ransom. But Northern Rock wanted to see the proposals in full before commenting.

Alliance & Leicester, whose members last week voted overwhelmingly in favour of conversion, expressed a similar view, while a Woolwich spokeswoman said the society would look closely at the Treasury's definition of a financial institution. It is thought societies might be allowed to acquire mortgage brokers and loan books with impunity.

Halifax, whose £10 billion conversion is also scheduled for next year, has already effectively waived its protection by planning the flotation of an existing company in the group. Spokesman Gary Marsh said the society would nevertheless watch the bill from the sidelines.

The wrangle between Ms Knight and the societies may become academic, anyway. The chances of the Bill reaching the statute book before the general election are put at 50:50 by many observers.

company law, shareholders with 10 per cent of stock will still be able to demand an extraordinary general meeting.

Whether the extra safeguard will be sufficient to deter the three building societies from carrying out their boycott remains questionable.

Yesterday, they indicated that a softening on the 20 per cent rule for shareholders would not be enough.

Andy Kulpers, assistant general manager of Northern Rock, said the society would welcome any move that would prevent a small group of shareholders holding the newly formed bank to ransom. But Northern Rock wanted to see the proposals in full before commenting.

Alliance & Leicester, whose members last week voted overwhelmingly in favour of conversion, expressed a similar view, while a Woolwich spokeswoman said the society would look closely at the Treasury's definition of a financial institution. It is thought societies might be allowed to acquire mortgage brokers and loan books with impunity.

Halifax, whose £10 billion conversion is also scheduled for next year, has already effectively waived its protection by planning the flotation of an existing company in the group. Spokesman Gary Marsh said the society would nevertheless watch the bill from the sidelines.

The wrangle between Ms Knight and the societies may become academic, anyway. The chances of the Bill reaching the statute book before the general election are put at 50:50 by many observers.

Call for investigation into rail pension 'highway robbery'

Rebecca Smithers
Political Correspondent

LABOUR demanded urgent clarification from the Government last night of plans for the £500 million surplus from the British Rail pension fund, after claims that the money is to be shared among new railway operators as a privatisation "sweetener".

Trade unions joined the calls for an independent investigation as they branded the revelation "highway robbery", and accused the Government of breaking its promise that the £10.5 billion British Rail pension fund would not be adversely affected by privatisation.

The Save Our Railways campaign group claimed that, although existing pensions were safe, there was nothing to prevent privatised rail companies from using the surplus — recently valued by the Government Actuary at £516 million — to take a holiday on pensions contributions.

Shadow transport secretary Andrew Smith wrote to Transport Secretary Sir George Young yesterday seek-

ing assurances that the position of pensioners and employees would be safeguarded, and that it would be the responsibility of the independent rail pension trustees to "determine the distribution of the surplus".

He also sought confirmation that the share and size of the surplus were not reflected in the prices offered by the operators when they were negotiating to take over the passenger franchises.

Sir George sought to play down fears by saying that any surplus would be "shared between the pensioners on the one hand and the employers on the other".

He admitted that bidders had been given information about the position of the pension fund when they were negotiating to take over the businesses but said this was "all open and above-board".

Trade unions were not convinced by the Government's explanation. Jimmy Knapp, general secretary of main rail union the RMT, said: "We will consider whatever action is necessary to defend the interests of pensioners, deferred pensioners and active members."

News in brief

Public finances back in the red

After a surprising move into surplus in October, the Government's finances were back in the red again last month, justifying the cautious approach to tax cuts taken by the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, in the Budget.

Total government borrowing in November was £2.6 billion — slightly better than predicted by many City analysts. This brings the accumulated deficit for the year to £13.9 billion, including the revenues from the privatisation programme, £8.5 billion lower than this time last year.

Small firms shed jobs

The small business sector, trumpeted as the main source of new jobs by the Government, has a dismal record, according to research by the Employment Policy Institute. One in two small firms go belly-up within three years and many of the survivors have been shedding jobs since the recession began in 1992.

Fairley bids for rival

Fairley, the electronic and engineering products group, has

North Sea free-for-all

After 35 years of controlling where oil companies can explore in the North Sea, the Government yesterday declared open season on untapped areas to promote new drilling and slow an expected decline in production. "At this stage... it would seem best to ask them [companies] where they see the best prospects," Lord Fraser, Britain's energy minister, said.

Ross in £44m buy-out

United Biscuits has sold Ross Vegetable Products, its frozen vegetables business, to a management buy-out team for £44 million.

Lloyds staff to strike

Staff at Lloyds-TSB are to strike on Christmas Eve, the banking and finance union Bifi said, over the bank's plans to keep branches open until 4.30pm that afternoon.

Fund managers get behind

Ian King

FIKI, the fast-expanding engineering group, was in the almost unprecedented position yesterday of securing the support of two leading fund managers on the day it launched a hostile £198.7 million bid for architectural and building products supplier Newman Tonks.

FKI said it already had the support of M&G and Britannic Assurance, two of Newman Tonks's institutional shareholders, who together own 13.37 per cent of shares in the target company.

The move is made all the more dramatic because M&G — which is Newman Tonks's largest shareholder — and Britannic are seen as two of the most conservative City institutions, and generally back incumbent managements against hostile bids.

It is normal practice for institutions at least to wait for a

Santa Scrooge

THE Swedish central bank is such a Scrooge. Yesterday it cut its interest rate for only the 28th time this year (yes, 28th; yes, this year) then partly pooped by pointing out that this would be the last one — well, at least until next year. Perhaps the Federal Reserve's cautious approach is catching.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.04	France 8.490	Italy 2.466	Singapore 2.28
Austria 17.02	Germany 2.5065	Malta 0.5550	South Africa 7.87
Belgium 61.85	Greece 388.55	Netherlands 2.6750	Spain 210.20
Canada 2.2255	Hong Kong 12.50	New Zealand 2.875	Sweden 11.13
Cyprus 0.7535	India 55.55	Norway 10.46	Switzerland 1.13
Denmark 3.82	Ireland 0.8720	Portugal 283.70	Turkey 168.002
Finland 7.83	Israel 5.10	Saudi Arabia 0.2190	USA 1.8295

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli sheqel).

Copy 10/15/96

GUINNESS REVISITED

by Dan Atkinson in Strasbourg and Roger Cowe

Saunders peddles tale of innocence

THE QUEST/Ruling rubs raw nerve of Britain's touchy relationship with the European Court of Human Rights

THERE was a time when Ernest Saunders sold toilet-tries, baby milk and a dark, stout beer whose name has become a synonym for one of the biggest financial scandals in British history: Guinness. But for the past seven years Mr Saunders has been selling just one product — his own innocence. Like the central character in Tom Wolfe's novel Bonfire of the Vanities, Mr Saunders has become "a career defendant". By chance, Mr Saunders's final appeal in his quest for justice to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, touched yet another raw nerve in the relationship between the UK and Europe's supranational institutions. The success of the Saunders appeal came after the court was presented with two contrasting interpretations of a case that was decided in Strasbourg nearly four years ago. Jean-Gustave Funke, a German living in France, was interrogated for a crime of exchange-control offences by the French Customs. The officials demanded he produce documents, he refused, the French authorities fined him daily and finally put a charge on his house. In February 1993, 13 years after the initial inquiry and six years after Mr Funke's death, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the French had violated his human rights by insisting he produce the evidence required to mount a case against him. This was held to be in breach of Article Six of Europe's Human Rights Convention. Enthusiasts for greater European integration have embraced Funke as the equivalent of the Miranda precedent in the United States; to them, Article Six is set to become Europe's answer to the Fifth Amendment. The British government took a different view, however. Sidney Kentridge QC, the UK advocate, told the court during the Saunders hearing: "The Funke case arose in a very different context." Nevertheless, Article Six was the basis of Mr Saunders's last attempt to remove what his counsel, Michael Be-

loff QC, told the court was "the stigma of his conviction". Between February 10 and May 6, 1987, Mr Saunders was interviewed nine times by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors investigating allegations that an illegal share-support operation took place during the takeover battle, worth a final £2.7 billion, waged by Guinness for the Scottish whisky group Distillers (DCL). Under British law, Mr Saunders had no right of silence during those interviews. Had he refused to answer any questions or produce documents, he would have committed a criminal offence. He went on trial in 1990, on 15 counts, including eight of false accounting, two of theft and several of conspiracy, and was convicted in August that year on 12 counts. His five-year sentence was halved in May 1991 by the Court of Appeal after it heard medical evidence he was suffering from pre-senile dementia. He was released after serving 10 months in an open prison. His counsel claimed the compulsory interviews (seven of which were admitted as evidence) were crucial to the Crown's success in obtaining conviction against him. The Crown told the court that this was nonsense. Mr Saunders, did not admit during the interviews with the inspectors nor in the witness box any involvement in propping up Guinness shares, it said. The judges rejected that claim yesterday, pointing out that if the DTI evidence had not been helpful to the prosecution, it would not have spent three days reading extracts to the Guinness trial jury. "The fact that such extensive use was made of the interviews strongly suggests that the prosecution must have believed that the reading of the transcripts assisted their case in establishing the applicant's dishonesty," the Strasbourg judges said. "That view was supported by the Guinness trial judge's statement that two of the seven interviews were capable of being considered a 'confession' under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. The UK had claimed the Funke case did not rule out the use of evidence acquired under compulsion, and won some support from the European Commission on Human Rights, which declined to suggest a blanket ban on such evidence. In September 1994, the commission brought the case (first raised by Mr Saunders in July 1988) to the court after ruling in May that year, by 14 votes to one, there had been a violation of Article Six.

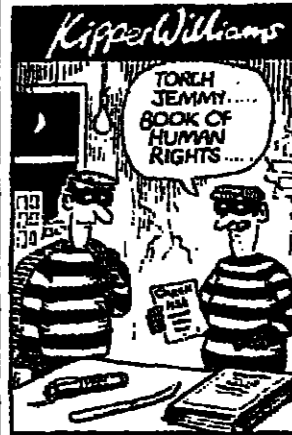


PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN REVELL

I do feel myself to be an innocent man. I never considered giving up this battle. This is not a question of compensation. This is a matter of principle; vindication of my name is sufficient.

Fraud busters deprived of key weapon

BRITAIN'S system for prosecuting serious white-collar crime was thrown into chaos yesterday by the European Court of Human Rights' ruling backing former Guinness chief Ernest Saunders. Special "talk-or-else" powers dating back more than 100 years will have to be abandoned. The Strasbourg judges have effectively banned the use in court of evidence gathered under threat of punishment for failure to answer, arguing that this negates suspects' right to silence, which is enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights. That means the Department of Trade and Industry, insolvency experts and possibly fraud investigators will lose their chief weapon in the battle against fraud. Duncan Akford of the law firm Cameron Markby Hewitt said: "It is a challenge to the system. The whole direction will have to be rethought." The Department of Trade and Industry said there were 340 cases going through the UK courts where some evidence obtained had been gained through the use of compulsion. The vast majority of these cases relate to company insolvency, but the Strasbourg judgment may also affect insolvency law. Some trials based on compulsory testimony may have to be dropped. The Government must act quickly to bring British law into line with Article Six of the convention. The DTI said all options would be considered, including the possibility of legislation. Only if the Government reclassifies serious fraud as a national security issue will it be able to duck the Strasbourg ruling. Fraud investigations by the Serious Fraud Office may not be affected. The SFO said last night that its powers were different to those used by DTI inspectors, allowing it only in special circumstances to use in court evidence gathered under compulsion. But, with the court signalling its intention to strengthen Article Six into a European equivalent of America's Fifth Amendment, the time may come when the SFO's ability to strip suspects of their rights against self-incrimination will be struck down in Strasbourg. The Government can retain the rights of DTI inspectors to compel witnesses to give evidence — which dates back at least until the middle of last century, when the courts up-



held obligations on bankrupts to explain their conduct without recourse to a right of silence. But such evidence would not be able to be used against defendants in court. This would allow DTI inspectors and insolvency officials to pursue their primary job of discovering what has actually occurred within a company.

Black beer and black arts serve as symbols of excess

THE AFFAIR/Wall Street broker in disgrace spilled beans over share rigging in bid battle for Distillers

IT WAS THE day before yesterday: 1985. Most of the furniture of that era — the Berlin Wall, Margaret Hilda Thatcher in No 10, Ronnie Reagan in the White House — has been tidied away. Except for one piece: Guinness, the tap that will not stop dripping. Eleven years since the now forgotten Jimmy Gulliver, head of Argyle, the supermarket group Safeway, began trying to take over the old Scotch drinks group Distillers (DCL), Guinness rumbles on, a metaphor for financial scandal, social prejudice, a so-called 'age of excess', and the abuse of Crown power. Back then, Guinness meant

one thing: a black beer originating in London markets (hence porter), which had emigrated to Ireland, eventually finding fans in outposts of the British Empire. But times were changing throughout British industry and Guinness's family owners had felt the chill wind of the first recession; anxious about falling sales they engaged the marketing whizz-kid Ernest Saunders. He may not have fitted the patrician Guinness style, but in the atmosphere of the 1980s that was a recommendation. Already victorious in the battle for whisky-maker Bell, Mr Saunders was stalking bigger prey. And Mr Gulliver's tilt at DCL gave him the opening he needed. Mr Saunders — still seen in the industry as an arch wheeler-dealer — was no more typical of Distillers' style than he had been of the Guinness one. But faced with the prospect of being taken over by a mere grocer, DCL management swallowed its pride and sought salvation in an agreed bid from Guinness.

Ironically, given its later central role in the case, the Department of Trade and Industry made the whole thing possible. Previously a Tartan Curtain had effectively protected Scottish firms against predatory activity. But such interventionist doctrine was out of favour and the DTI made it clear to DCL there would be no help from the Monopolies Commission. The new year, 1986, dawned with a three-way fight: Mr Gulliver bidding for Distillers; Distillers fighting off Mr Gulliver; and Mr Saunders fighting Mr Gulliver with help from Distillers. It was close. The bidding went to £2.7 billion. Victory for Guinness was by no means certain, hanging on a thread until the last moment. The fight was one of the dirtiest anyone could remember. And key to the battle was the respective values of three sets of shares: Distillers, Guinness and Mr Gulliver's Argyle. And it was the alleged manipulation and inflation of Guinness shares by an unlawful share support operation that was to trigger what has now been a decade-long criminal affair. Hardly had Mr Saunders time to savour triumph than events across the Atlantic were conspiring to destroy him. The undoubted star of mid-1980s Wall Street was an arbitrageur called Ivan Boesky. His book on share choosing was a best-seller. Admirers talked breathlessly of his complex mathematical system for choosing investments. But America's fearsome financial regulator, the Securities and Exchange Commission, was sceptical and its inquiries proved its suspicions: Boesky's 'system' was the oldest in the book, inside information. During hours of testimony to the SEC, Boesky mentioned in passing that he had been involved in share support during the Guinness bid. Under an information-sharing agreement, the SEC alerted the British authorities. On December 1, 1986 two DTI inspectors arrived at the office of Ernest Saunders. The landlidle had started. Mr Saunders was questioned by the DTI, dismissed by Guinness, charged with aid, in 1990, convicted of running an illegal share-rigging operation during the bid, and led away to prison. But Guinness would not go away. In February 1992 the Serious Fraud Office dropped charges against the financier, Roger Seelig, and the stockbroker, David Mayhew. Later that month the trial of the financier Lord Spens and Mr Seelig (on different charges) collapsed. In February 1993, an American lawyer, Thomas Ward, was acquitted on Guinness charges. The affair was increasingly looking less like a triumphant investigation and punishment of wrongdoing than a fiasco — a view underlined by Mr Saunders' victory yesterday.



The Guinness defendants during their trial (from left): Ernest Saunders, Gerald Ronson, Anthony Farnes and Jack Lyons. COURTROOM ILLUSTRATION: PRISCILLA COLEMAN

Advertisement for a computer system. Features include: Buy Now, Pay June Next Year; £999.93 inc. VAT; £851 + VAT; Offer Ends 18th DEC; Place Your Order Now; Sales Lines Open Late Until 8pm Mon-Fri; Three Ways to Pay; 1. Pay With Order; 2. Six Months Interest Free Credit; 3. Pay Over 2 1/2 Years; 198%; TIME 01282 777 111.

Wake lords

A

1997 FUTURE

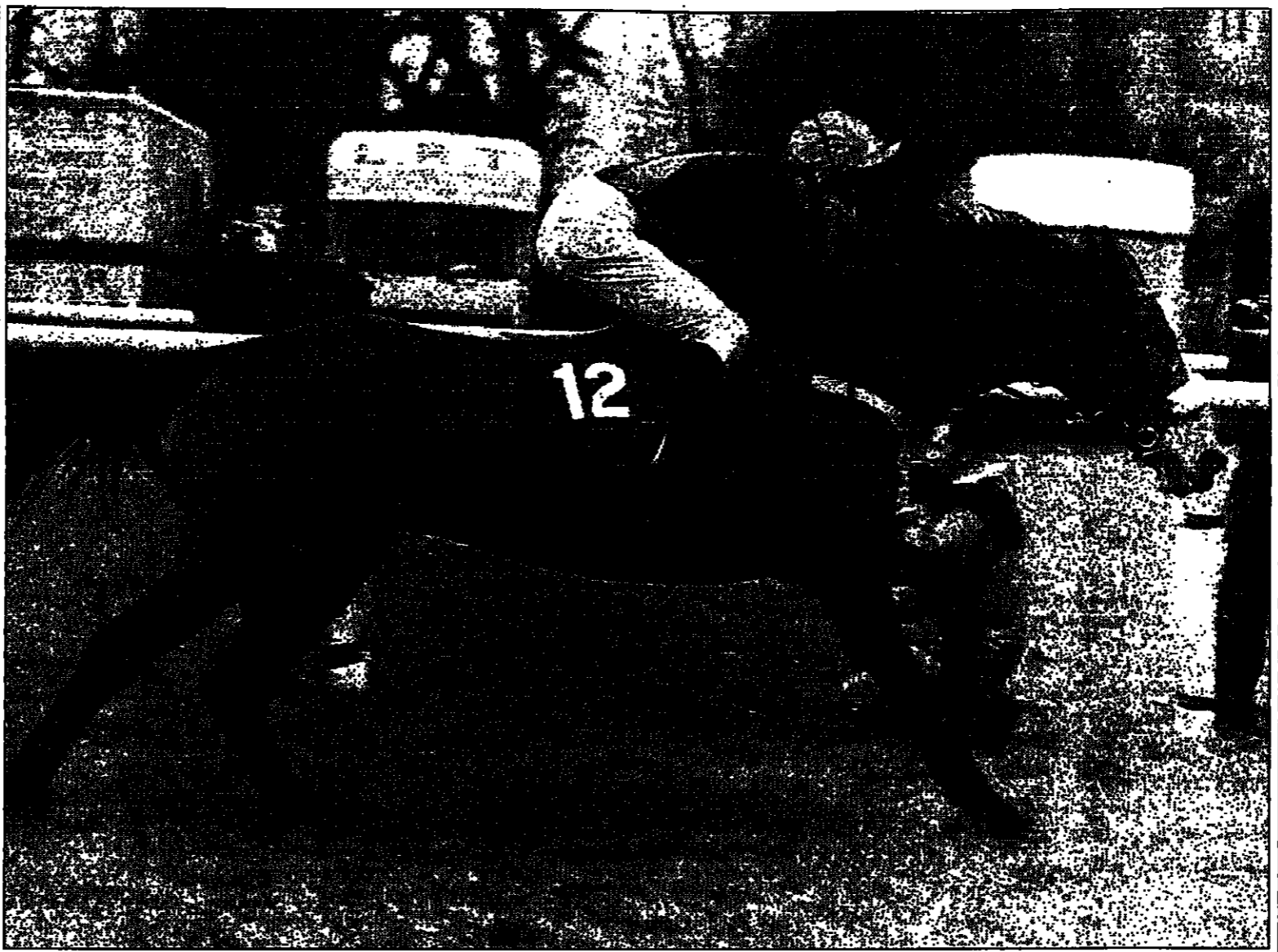
سكا من الامم

Racing Wakeham lords it

BHB critics hit for six at annual forum says Chris Hawkins

As Tristram Ricketts rose to open the... BHB critics hit for six at annual forum says Chris Hawkins

pool would need to be doubled to something like £116 million... BHB critics hit for six at annual forum says Chris Hawkins



Winning Quest... Mick Fitzgerald and Rough Quest scoring at Folkestone yesterday

Rough Quest proves his King George fitness

Ken Oliver... Rough Quest was the star attraction at Folkestone yesterday

to his main rival. He had two lengths to make up on the run-in, but responded well to get up close home and score by half a length.

handicapped. He'll have much more weight this time, but with this horse that really doesn't worry me.

"Nathen Lad will go for the King George after Bangor, at least that is the plan today," said trainer Jenny Pitman.

Plans to build the America's Cup base in downtown Auckland could be delayed for six months by Maori objections.

Bangor runners and riders with form guide

Table with columns for race times (12.30, 1.00, 1.30, 2.00, 2.30, 3.00, 3.30, 4.00, 4.30, 5.00, 5.30, 6.00, 6.30, 7.00, 7.30, 8.00, 8.30, 9.00, 9.30, 10.00, 10.30, 11.00, 11.30) and race names.

Catterick

Table with columns for race times (12.30, 1.00, 1.30, 2.00, 2.30, 3.00, 3.30, 4.00, 4.30, 5.00, 5.30, 6.00, 6.30, 7.00, 7.30, 8.00, 8.30, 9.00, 9.30, 10.00, 10.30, 11.00, 11.30) and race names.

Exeter

Table with columns for race times (12.40, 1.10, 1.40, 2.10, 2.40, 3.10, 3.40, 4.10, 4.40, 5.10, 5.40, 6.10, 6.40, 7.10, 7.40, 8.10, 8.40, 9.10, 9.40, 10.10, 10.40, 11.10, 11.40) and race names.

Results

Table with columns for race names and results, including winners and runners-up.

RACELINE advertisement for Bangor Exeter Catterick, featuring phone numbers and race details.

Small advertisement for a horse-related product or service.

Advertisement for Double helping for Dobbin, featuring a photo of a horse and jockey.

Advertisement for Double helping for Dobbin, featuring a photo of a horse and jockey.

Advertisement for Double helping for Dobbin, featuring a photo of a horse and jockey.

Soccer

Premiership: Coventry 2, Newcastle 1

Huckerby deepens the gloom

Tom Evans

NEWCASTLE United had £21 million of striking talent on view at Highfield Road. Strange to think that the player they sold for a relative pittance four weeks ago was the man who mattered most last night. Darren Huckerby did for Coventry what he failed to do in his time at St James' Park. He eclipsed both Shearer and Ferdinand in half an hour, making one goal and scoring the other as Coventry gained their first win since the opening day of the season. Rarely can a player have waited such a short time as Huckerby to prove to the club he had just left that he was probably worth keeping. Six minutes into his fourth game for the Sky Blues had elapsed before Newcastle's manager Kevin Keegan, who sold the former Lincoln striker to Coventry last month, saw Huckerby get off the mark for his new club. Richardson, noted more for the ferocity of his challenges rather than the accuracy of his passing, delivered the first of two telling first-half blows. With Peacock and Albert standing horribly square, he found the 20-year-old who used his speed to great advantage before drilling a low shot across Strickland and into the bottom corner of the net. Unsurprisingly, given the lack of first-team opportunities he was afforded on Tyneside, Huckerby celebrated at length. So, too, did the crowd. Incredibly, Coventry had not scored in the first half of any competitive match at Highfield Road all season. Newcastle began to rally midway through the half,

though, when first Shearer confounded Daish with a delightful piece of skill before testing Ogrizovic, then Albert did the same with a powerful header from Gillespie's free-kick. But better was to follow for Coventry on 32 minutes when Richardson, again the instigator, curled the ball inside Albert to release Huckerby. The youngster waited for support and found his captain McAllister at the edge of the area. Unless he is taking penalties against England, it would be difficult to find a cooler head than the Scottish captain's. He struck a delightful shot across Strickland for the second and neither Highfield Road, nor Keegan, could believe what was unfolding before them. To add insult to injury for Newcastle, Shearer's exquisite header from Gillespie's corner was then diverted at the last by Ogrizovic, who belied his 38 years with a save of quite staggering agility. Coventry were denied a third two minutes after the restart, when, more by luck than judgment, Strickland blocked a Williams effort with his legs after Whelan had intelligently stepped over Telfer's low cross. But Shearer has a rare knack for scoring and it was not too long before he demonstrated his art. After 61 minutes he stooped to conquer after Gillespie gave Beardsley a chance to drill in a low cross from the right, and Newcastle launched a frantic final assault on the home goal.

Coventry: Ogrizovic, Shaw, Williams, Daish, Richardson, Whelan, McAllister, Strickland, Telfer, Dallas, Mubareka, Beardsley, Simons, Watson, Peacock, Albert, Elliott, Beardsley, Gillespie, Lee, Referee: P Jones (Loughborough).



Left foot forward... Darren Huckerby, who gave his former club an early reminder of his goalscoring talents, slips past Robert Lee. MIKE HEWITT

City again in hunt for Kidd

Ken Ross

MANCHESTER CITY are considering making a second, audacious attempt to convince Brian Kidd that he should swap the No. 2 job at Old Trafford for the manager's position at Maine Road. The First Division club's board has discussed inviting him to fill the vacancy. City's previous attempt to persuade Kidd to return to the club he left in the late Seventies, after scoring 44 league goals in 98 games, failed 18 months ago. At the time he said that he was content to remain as assistant to Alex Ferguson and that he was not contemplating a step up to front-line management. Manchester United were adamant that the man who is viewed in some quarters as Ferguson's likely successor would remain to honour a lucrative and long-term contract. City have been without a full-time manager since early November when Steve Coppell resigned on health grounds only 30 days after being appointed. Since then Phil Neal, who was Coppell's assistant, has been in charge of first-team affairs but his attempts to change City's fortunes have been unsuccessful and he now accepts that he is unlikely to be appointed. City's decision to pursue Kidd was prompted by a failure to convince Howard Wilkinson to make an immediate return to management. The former Leeds United manager has twice been asked to assume control at Maine Road but he would not discuss his long-term plans until the new year. Bristol City, meanwhile, have been charged under two articles of FA rules relating to a failure to control violence that marred Sunday's derby with Bristol Rovers, some of whose players were allegedly assaulted by home fans after the final whistle. The Ashton Gate club have 14 days to respond to the charge. The chairman Scott Davidson said he was "very disappointed", claiming that they had met all the conditions laid down by Health and Safety officials. "We ourselves were victims of the hoodlums, who clearly came along to cause trouble," he said. "The faces we are seeing on the videos are not faces we recognise. They are troublemakers from outside the club." Middlebrough have taken the Slovak Bratislava left-back Vladimir Kinder on trial. The 27-year-old, three times the Slovakia Player of the Year, is expected to play for the reserves at home to Port Vale tonight. Also appearing in midfield will be Emerson, trying to get match-fit and playing alongside his 34-year-old brother-in-law Fabinho, who started with Flamengo of Brazil before moving to Deportivo Chavez in Portugal.

First Division: Crystal Palace 0, Sheffield United 1 Walker in Palace coup

Jeremy Alexander

DAVE BASSETT's past caught up with him last night. Sheffield United were left last December after eight years as manager, rolled over Crystal Palace to open a six-point gap between these sides in the leading pack as United moved above Barnsley and level with Bolton on points. Palace had now taken three points from three draws in their last six games. They were desperately tentative last night, badly missing Hopkins' control and dynamism. Neither side, despite their lofty positions, entered the match with heads held high. United marked the start of Howard Kendall's second year in charge on Saturday with an abject 4-1 defeat at Oxford while Palace ended their 1-1 draw at Norwich with a brawl that saw Muscat and Houghton sent off. Yesterday the Football Association called for video evidence of that incident. Caution versus meekness did not do well. Palace indeed seemed so shell-shocked that they remained shell-bound, giving United the confidence to come out and settle the better. After 12 minutes Walker headed a Spackman cross against a post and then Scott infiltrated a status-quo defence to meet White's free-kick with a poor shot. Muscat was sweetness itself, although no more generous than the rest as Palace's midfield retreated to assist — or rather to muddle — the defence, leaving Dyer and Shipperley without support or a decent service. In a United defence that missed Vonk on Saturday, Holdsworth and Hodgson could hardly believe the comfort of their ride. United might well have taken the lead five minutes before they did. Roberts, the sweeper, missed an intercept-

tion and Walker sent Katchour clear, but Day's low scoop prevented the cross-shot curling inside the far post. A minute before half-time, however, Palace's defence were again slow to react to Beard's centre from the left, allowing Walker to run the ball past Day. The goal, or more probably Bassett's tongue during the interval, brought a sharp rise in Palace's spirit level. On the hour Kelly had to save at Dyer's feet and then Shipperley escaped from Hodgson and Patterson made a marvellous saving tackle. In the last 30 minutes Palace laid siege but were unable to break down an indomitable defence. Crystal Palace: Day, Ewerby, Gordon (John), Roberts, Tully, Freeman, Muscat, Houghton, Shipperley, Dyer (McKendrick, 71), Vero, Board (Anthony, 80), Parker, Spackman, Hodgson, Holdsworth, White, Patterson, Katchour, Walker, Scott (Stimpson, 81). Referee: D Orr (Pwll, Radok).

West Ham say no to tax exile's £30m

WEST HAM's board yesterday thwarted a bid to take control of the Premiership club by a millionaire tax exile who was willing to inject £30 million. Michael Tabor, a race-horse owner who sold his chain of betting shops to Coral for £30 million last year, wanted shareholders at yesterday's agm to reject the re-election of the Upton Park chairman Terry Brown and vote in his own representative, the lawyer Henry Montlake. But Tabor, 54, who has homes in Monte Carlo and Barbados, knew the attempt was a long shot. Brown having the pre-emptive backing of about 90 per cent of shareholders. After the meeting, West Ham's managing director Peter Storrie indicated that Brown had begun negotiations which could lead to the club being floated on the Stock Exchange.

Scottish Premier Division: Rangers 4, Kilmarnock 2 Andersens's triple blow

Patrick Glenn

PAUL GASCOIGNE'S missed first-half penalty became irrelevant as Rangers overcame the concession of an early goal with a bundle of their own, highlighted by Bo Andersen's hat-trick. Barely four minutes had passed when the big home crowd was reduced to that quizzical silence peculiar to people unaccustomed to being denied their own way. Findlay flighted a free-kick from the right and Montgomerie flicked a 12-yard header to the right of Goram. The visitors from Ayrshire had only one further goal attempt in the first half — a long-range shot from Wright which was easily held by Goram — having clearly decided to contain the skirmishing to an area just outside Lekovic's jurisdiction.

The tactic worked until four minutes before half-time when a Lekovic clearance hardly cleared the ground and landed at the feet of Laudrup, who immediately played it ahead of the incoming Andersen. The striker reached it at the perfect moment on the left side of the area and slid a left-foot shot under Lekovic from 10 yards. The goalkeeper made up for his error in some style on the stroke of half-time when he deflected left to block Gascoigne's penalty, awarded after Dyan Kerr handled the England midfielder's free-kick from the front. But whatever Rangers' failings, there is always Laudrup. The Dane, having worked almost single-handedly to bring invention and penetration to the front, suddenly brought the service which provided two goals in three minutes. Just over an hour had been played when Laudrup ducked and dived between two defenders on the right before sending a low cross to the far post, where Robertson's left foot drove it over the line. Laudrup was a little fortunate with his next, a cross which was deflected to Steven; he quickly played it low towards Andersen who forced it home from six yards. Andersen completed his hat-trick in the 71st minute, receiving Cleland's centre from the right and hitting a left-foot shot on the turn past Lekovic from 10 yards. Then in the 88th minute a mistake in the Rangers defence set up the substitute Roberts, who scored from 10 yards. Rangers: Goram, Cleland, Robertson, Gaugh, McLaren (Patrick, 79min), Ferguson, Steven (McIntosh, 79), Gascoigne, Andersen, Albert, Laudrup (McCole, 79). Kilmarnock: Lekovic, McPherson, D Kerr, Leuchan, Montgomery (McGowan, 78), Peck, McNeil, Ralby, Wright (Roberts, 77), Bagan (Baird, 85), A Kerr. Referee: M McCorry (Glasgow).

played when Laudrup ducked and dived between two defenders on the right before sending a low cross to the far post, where Robertson's left foot drove it over the line. Laudrup was a little fortunate with his next, a cross which was deflected to Steven; he quickly played it low towards Andersen who forced it home from six yards. Andersen completed his hat-trick in the 71st minute, receiving Cleland's centre from the right and hitting a left-foot shot on the turn past Lekovic from 10 yards. Then in the 88th minute a mistake in the Rangers defence set up the substitute Roberts, who scored from 10 yards. Rangers: Goram, Cleland, Robertson, Gaugh, McLaren (Patrick, 79min), Ferguson, Steven (McIntosh, 79), Gascoigne, Andersen, Albert, Laudrup (McCole, 79). Kilmarnock: Lekovic, McPherson, D Kerr, Leuchan, Montgomery (McGowan, 78), Peck, McNeil, Ralby, Wright (Roberts, 77), Bagan (Baird, 85), A Kerr. Referee: M McCorry (Glasgow).

Pools Forecast

Table with columns for FA Carling Premiership, Scottish League, and First Division, listing teams and their predicted outcomes.

Klinsmann is linked with England again

JURGEN KLINSMANN will be allowed to leave Bayern Munich next June, renewing speculation that he will return to England, according to a German newspaper report. The 32-year-old striker, originally contracted to Bayern until 1998, asked for his deal to be changed so that he could leave next summer. The request is believed to have been granted. Blackburn and more recently Nottingham Forest have been strongly linked with the Bosman ruling would cost no transfer fee if he came back to English football at the end of his Bayern contract. Klinsmann has publicly criticised the tactics of Bayern's Italian coach Giovanni Trapattoni and has had a long feud with the captain Lothar Matthaus. Sean Dundee, the South African-born striker recently voted the Bundesliga's Player of the Year, has been granted German citizenship, clearing the way for him to play for the national team. Dundee plays for Karlsruhe and is top scorer in the Bundesliga with 13 goals. He has lived in Germany for four years and he applied for citizenship using a fast-track method reserved for cases of "public interest". Normally, 10 years' residence in Germany is required. The 24-year-old player's move sparked outrage in his native country, where some politicians accused him of turning his back on South Africa.

Results

Table of sports results including Soccer, American Football, Alpine Skiing, Basketball, Chess, and other sports.

Team talk

The independent news and reports service 0891 33 77+ Arsenal 06 Ipswich Town 09 Sheffield United 15 Aston Villa 11 Leeds United 03 Sheffield Wed. 14 Birm. City 34 Leicester City 35 Southampton 20 Blackburn 21 Liverpool 04 Stoke City 30 Bolton 28 Man. City 02 Sunderland 27 Brentford 24 Man. United 01 Tottenham Hot. 07 Burnley 21 Middlesbrough 23 West Ham 12 Chelsea 06 Millwall 29 Wimbledon 26 Coventry City 17 Newcastle Utd 16 Wolves 37 Derby County 26 Norwich City 18 Celtic 09 Everton 05 Nottm. Forest 13 Rangers 10 Hudd. Town 22 QPR 25

Skiing

ALBERTO TOMBA celebrated his return from injury with second place in yesterday's slalom at Madonna di Campiglio. The Austrian, Thomas Sykora took his second win this season and leads the World Cup slalom standings after three races. Racing for the first time since March, Tomba, who was slightly troubled by bruising under his right eye, caught a gate on the first leg and managed only eighth place. But as usual he turned up the power for the second leg with the fastest time of 61.56sec. Sykora's combined time on the Canalone Miramonti piste was 1min 37.90sec against Tomba's 1.38.48. France's Sebastien Amiez, who fell heavily in the warm-up, was third in 1.39.92.

Ice Hockey

HAWKS back in land of the living We Batcherder KINGSTON Hawks have raised the funds to complete the season. The Premier League club, who last week suspended their fixtures while seeking money, will be back on the ice at Guildford on Saturday and at home to Slough on Sunday. The North-eastern town's business community is said to have underwritten most of the season's projected £35,000 shortfall. Great Britain face Switzerland in tonight's Olympic qualifying game at Sheffield towards the forward Nicky Chinn, who has an injured hand. A British win will ensure they reach February's final qualifying tournament. Manchester Storm, second from bottom of the Superleague, yesterday signed a netminder and a forward from North American minor-league clubs and released the German netminder Marc Gromau. His replacement, Eric Raymond, 24, was with Hamilton Blizzard and forward Mike Maurice arrives from Houston Astros, qualifying game at Sheffield towards the forward Nicky Chinn, who has an injured hand. A British win will ensure they reach February's final qualifying tournament. Manchester Storm, second from bottom of the Superleague, yesterday signed a netminder and a forward from North American minor-league clubs and released the German netminder Marc Gromau. His replacement, Eric Raymond, 24, was with Hamilton Blizzard and forward Mike Maurice arrives from Houston Astros,

Handwritten signature or note at the bottom of the page.

Sports Politics

Nick Varley reports on the repercussions of yesterday's decision to turn Britain's most famous sporting landmark into the new national stadium

Wembley aims to take on the world

AN unprecedented hat-trick of world-class events was brought closer by yesterday's choice of Wembley as the new national stadium.

The British Athletic Federation confirmed it will now apply. Its spokesman Tony Ward said it had received a "pretty strong" indication from the sport's world governing body that it would be successful.

national stadium in London is not it will enhance the city's existing facilities, act as a catalyst to attracting major new events to the capital city and would provide a foundation for any future Olympic bid.

conditions of its approval is that it remains viable beyond the Commonwealth Games. Councilor Graham Stringer, leader of the Manchester bid, admitted that the stadium and pool were probably the best they could have hoped for.

of the English Sports Council, Ajax's new stadium in Amsterdam has endured. The existing stadium will be almost entirely demolished — only the famous Twin Towers will remain — from summer 1998. But it has not been decided if that will mean closing it during rebuilding work scheduled to take between two and three years.

plans a similar structure at Wembley's international prestige had been a major factor in its success. "Both bids had their attractions. Wembley, significantly, included proposals for a 'flagship events' programme from the potential users of the stadium."

um's owner Wembley plc, admitted: "We have won the Oscar, now we've got to make the film." The company will give the new stadium to a trust to keep around rules forbidding Lottery money benefiting the private sector. The company will then concentrate on the bookings business as a commercial venture.

minister, issued a warning: "The Sports Council have clearly been satisfied that the sum of £120 million of public money from the Lottery will be spent wisely. The Labour Party wish to be equally satisfied that no public money will find its way into private shareholders' pockets, and that ticket pricing will reflect the ability to pay of the vast majority of sports fans."

Cup final could go north for one season

THE FA Cup final may move from Wembley for the first time since 1923 as a result of the massive redevelopment work to be carried out at the stadium, writes Nick Varley.

domestic fixture being played at Wembley. But rebuilding work might mean the famous stadium is unavailable for the showpiece game for at least one season, near the turn of the century.

hoped the city's new 60,000-seat venue would host the game, and other finals, if Wembley were closed. "In the year 2000, it is a possibility. Our stadium will be up and running by then and, depending on negotiations with the FA and the Rugby League, it could stage the games," he said.

Cricket

Curtain up on Atherton's desperados

David Hopps looks for England to perform in Bulawayo after dire rehearsals

MICHAEL Atherton today faces the crisis of his captaincy since the ball-tampering affair, as England attempt to rectify an inadequate start to their tour of Zimbabwe with victory in the first Test at Queen's.

Atherton survived allegations more than two years ago about soil in his pockets at Lord's, but egg on his face might be more difficult to explain away. For England not to outplay Zimbabwe, the weakest Test nation, over the two-Test series would leave their stock lower than at any time since he took office.

The one-day defeats against a President's XI and Zimbabwe and the first-class humiliation against Mashonaland have all been put down, to varying extents, to acclimatisation; the danger is that England have become acclimatised to losing.

The Zimbabwe captain Alistair Campbell puts England's unimpressive build-up to the first Test into perspective. Since achieving Test status, Zimbabwe's priority has been survival. Now they are bewildered by a novel experience: they actually think they can win.

"This is the most confident we have ever been going into a Test series," Campbell said. "Usually our aim is to be competitive and not to lose by a massive margin. This time it's different, this is the time going into the match believing that we can win."



Beefing it up in Bulawayo... Botham makes a pointed observation during practice but Lloyd's thoughts are kept to himself

entire number of reasonably competent players and they would hardly fill a white-water raft on the Zambezi. There are some successful characters — David Houghton's unorthodox and punchy batting, Paul Strang's leg-spin and Heath Streak's new-ball bowling pose most danger — but they have won only one Test in their brief history.

And that 40-1 upset had murky overtones, for the Pakistan side, led by Salim Malik, became embroiled in accusations of match fixing.

are on Monday revealed a "hot spot" which will prevent him bowling for three days, and it may be a further week before the seriousness of the injury can be determined.

Nobody was bandying odds of 40-1 yesterday, with most local bookmakers talking of an even game. Yet England, for all the horrors of the past three weeks, have the capacity to win, and win well; all they have to do is believe it. As Raymond Illingworth, the former chairman of selectors, muttered before disappearing into a Spanish sunset, if we cannot beat Zimbabwe we really are in a mess.

With Ronnie Irani unfit and Alec Stewart keeping wicket in preference to Jack Russell, the final seam-bowling place rests between Chris Silverwood and Andrew Caddick — unless England are influenced by suggestions that the Queen's pitch will possess more pace and bounce than its sluggish one-day counterpart on Sunday and hence drop the left-arm spinner Phil Tufnell to accommodate four seamers.

Atherton accepts no talk of crisis, just as he refused to admit to a back injury less than a fortnight ago when he could hardly walk. He referred yesterday to "imperialism kicking us in the teeth", as if to

rests between Chris Silverwood and Andrew Caddick — unless England are influenced by suggestions that the Queen's pitch will possess more pace and bounce than its sluggish one-day counterpart on Sunday and hence drop the left-arm spinner Phil Tufnell to accommodate four seamers.

Atherton accepts no talk of crisis, just as he refused to admit to a back injury less than a fortnight ago when he could hardly walk. He referred yesterday to "imperialism kicking us in the teeth", as if to

White... 16-month gap

night, however, the curtain rises and we all thrill to a wondrous performance. Alternatively you might like to regard the first Test as a film. At the Rainbow Cinema in downtown Bulawayo the late show this week happens to be Desperado. It has an 18 certificate and is not for the squeamish. Somehow that sounds more like it.

WELLS (from: Anderson (capt), Knight, Stewart, Hussain, Thorpe, Crawley, Croft, Gough, Silverwood, Maitland, Tufnell, Caddick).

firm offer to the Newhaven-born player, who has two years of his contract to run. Jimmy Adams took five wickets in a career-best haul as West Indies ended a run of seven defeats with an emphatic seven-wicket win over Pakistan in their World Series match in Adelaide yesterday.

firm offer to the Newhaven-born player, who has two years of his contract to run. Jimmy Adams took five wickets in a career-best haul as West Indies ended a run of seven defeats with an emphatic seven-wicket win over Pakistan in their World Series match in Adelaide yesterday.

firm offer to the Newhaven-born player, who has two years of his contract to run. Jimmy Adams took five wickets in a career-best haul as West Indies ended a run of seven defeats with an emphatic seven-wicket win over Pakistan in their World Series match in Adelaide yesterday.

firm offer to the Newhaven-born player, who has two years of his contract to run. Jimmy Adams took five wickets in a career-best haul as West Indies ended a run of seven defeats with an emphatic seven-wicket win over Pakistan in their World Series match in Adelaide yesterday.

Chess

Schoolboy McShane threatens masters

THE 12-year-old Luke McShane is close to achieving Britain's youngest ever International Master result after his fine start at the Colubonian Masters in Edinburgh, writes Leonard Barden.

McShane, the UK's most promising junior since Nigel Short, outplayed Scotland's No.5 Douglas Bryson in 51 moves and leads the 10-player entry with three wins and three draws. The Westminster schoolboy has remaining points from his remaining three games to achieve the master norm.

aged eight, is already the youngest Briton to beat a grandmaster and can break Short's record, set in 1978, as the youngest UK international tournament winner if he wins in Edinburgh. Garry Kasparov, joint leader with Vassily Ivanchuk of the Ukraine in the Las Palmas tournament, has increased his lead over his rivals in the January 1997 Fide world rankings. The world champion has 2,768 points, 30 ahead of India's Vishy Anand and 38 in front of the Russian rival Anatoly Karpov. The leading Briton in the list is Short in 10th place; Sadler is 26th, his best placing yet.

Rugby Union

Coventry set to reject soccer club takeover bid

COVENTRY CITY have suffered a setback in their attempt to take over the city's rugby club. The proposal centred on Coventry RFC selling their Coundon Road ground to finance redevelopment of the derelict Butts sports stadium and using the football club's Highfield Road for Sunday matches. However, the rugby club's committee have recommended that members vote at tomorrow's egn for a proposal submitted by the Leander property company which promises a move to a new stadium and £1 million from a share issue.

his bid hours before Monday's deadline, said: "I wasn't aware that the rugby committee was actually voting on the proposal on Monday. I am staggered and very surprised that people can make such an important decision so quickly. "Given a proper airing and if people are given time to assess the logic of what we have put to them, they will realise this is a sensible solution to a difficult situation. There should not be a knee-jerk reaction because of a supposed £1 million."

Swansea are hoping to sign Joos Joubert, the Springbok full-back Andre Joubert's cousin, who had an outstanding game at centre last Saturday when South Africa A defeated the Emerging Wales team at Swansea. The 24-year-old, who plays for Natal, met Swansea officials after the game but is expected to become a full international in the next few months and that is likely to put him out of the club's price range. West Hartlepool have recalled John Stabler for their Pilkington Cup fifth-round tie at Newcastle on Sunday. Mark Ring replaces the injured centre Chris John.

Motor Racing

Boycott mood spreads after death charges

THE sport's chiefs admitted yesterday that Formula One teams may refuse to compete in Italy next year in the wake of the manslaughter charges brought against Frank Williams and five others over Ayrton Senna's death. The world governing body Fia warned that it might face "difficulty" persuading competitors from outside Italy to participate in the San Marino and Italian grands prix. There may also be a problem recruiting race officials after the charge against Roland Brunseyaede, the Belgian race director who oversaw the tragedy at Imola in 1994.

Fia's warning came in the wake of comments by Flavio Briatore, the head of Benetton, who said he would boycott the two races if anyone were convicted. "Fatality is part of the game," he said. Yesterday Ken Tyrrell added his voice to the general concern. "I have no doubt that teams will get together to decide what action should be taken."

"I think the fact that it has happened to the Williams team is the most worrying aspect of all. They are arguably the most reliable team in the history of Formula One. You can only achieve that reliability by absolute excellence, superb design and making sure every nut and bolt is secured. If this can happen to them, what chance is there for the rest of us?"

The Jordan team echoed Tyrrell. "We will be looking to the Fia for guidance on this," said Ian Phillips, the team's commercial director, "but the gut feeling is, as things stand, we couldn't risk racing in Italy."

not really an issue which the teams can handle on their own." Phillips also praised Fia's prompt action in sending the Italian government, via the Automobile Club of Italy, an urgent memorandum outlining the difficulties caused by Monday's charges. "Max Mosley has very quickly taken a stance on the matter, as we would have expected, and we are confident in his ability to sort it out."

"This is a uniquely Italian problem requiring a uniquely Italian solution," said Mosley. If there is no solution, however, replacing the two Italian events would not pose any problem for Fia. There are already 17 races — one more than usual — on the 1997 calendar and Jerez, in southern Spain, could easily step in to keep 16 rounds in the championship next season.

Lola has signed Ricardo Rosset, the Brazilian displaced by Damon Hill at Arrows, and the Italian Vincenzo Sospirti to spearhead their grand prix challenge next season.

Ski Hotline

Table with columns for resorts in France, Austria, Italy, and Switzerland. Includes details like 'Ski Snapshot' and 'Ski Hotline' with phone numbers and website information.

Cricket: Winter Tour - Zimbabwe 1 Day International. For regular score updates call 0891 22 88 29.

Chess: Schoolboy McShane threatens masters. The 12-year-old Luke McShane is close to achieving Britain's youngest ever International Master result.

Rugby Union: Coventry set to reject soccer club takeover bid. Coventry City have suffered a setback in their attempt to take over the city's rugby club.

Ski Hotline: The Latest snow and weather reports from almost 200 resorts in Europe and North America. By phone or fax call: 0891 002 006.

Rough Quest back with a victory, page 13

Wembley captures the national prize, page 15

City make a new play for Kidd, page 14

Atherton faces a test of resolve, page 15

SportsGuardian

SOCCER

Premiership: Liverpool 4, Nottingham Forest 2

Liverpool soar to the top

Ian Ross

LIVERPOOL, scoring freely at Anfield for the second time in three days, find themselves at the top of the Premiership by two points this morning, a ominous sight no doubt for Arsenal, Wimbledon and the others that share the Merseyside club's lofty ambition.

Despite the emphatic margin of their victory this was not a vintage performance, but it did not really need to be against a Nottingham Forest side that fought hard but its fast beginning to appreciate that relegation is more of a probability than a possibility.

They opened brightly enough, but the sweet rhythm that Liverpool had struck against Middlesbrough on Saturday seemed to have suffered no disruption at all during three days of relative inactivity, and they rolled over Forest like a rising tide.

McManaman's free-spirited breaks down the right constantly opened up a defence which, the dependable Pearce apart, quivered like a leaf in a stiff breeze.

It is collectively that Forest continue to disappoint, for although the component parts would appear to be in place there is no discernible sense of unity. Indeed it was typical of Clark's current ill-fortune that he had lost the influential Chettle to injury on an evening which screamed out for experienced defenders.

After only four minutes Allen had to hook the ball off the line after Wright's header took a fortuitous deflection off Ruddock's shoulder.

After his heroics at the weekend it was almost refreshing to be reminded that Fowler is sometimes subject to human frailties. In the sixth minute his precise lob from 20 yards drifted over the advancing Crossley but cleared the crossbar by inches.



Ex-rated horror show for Forest... Collymore, their former striker, opens the scoring for Liverpool at Anfield last night PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID RAWLFFE

Forest's respite was brief, however, Liverpool scoring their inevitable opening goal after seven minutes. It was no masterpiece, though. Crossley's poor clearance arrived at the feet of Fowler, who unselfishly pushed it forward

into the path of Stan Collymore. The former Forest striker and the current Forest goalkeeper arrived at the ball at precisely the same moment, but fortune favoured Collymore, who succeeded in getting the first touch and

finding the unguarded target with a low shot. Forest fleetingly hinted at a revival as Liverpool's swaggering self-confidence threatened to get the better of them. Unfortunately, just as against Blackburn Rovers and New-

castle United, their chances fell to Haaland. A talented player with a burgeoning reputation for looking gift horses in the mouth, he squandered two very presentable openings before Liverpool went further ahead after 27 minutes.

Collymore freed down the right by Babb's delightful pass, reached the byline before lobbing over a smart cross which Fowler converted with a close-range header.

It seemed probable at this point that Forest would curl up and die, but somehow they restored the game's competitive edge 11 minutes before the interval when Kevin Campbell turned in a scruffy goal after Liverpool had failed to deal adequately with an Allen corner.

The goal was rather more than Forest deserved and made a mockery of Liverpool's overwhelming superiority, but it did little to effect a change in the balance of

power. Liverpool treated it as a minor setback, a pin-prick of an irritation, and within six minutes of the restart they had scored again.

This effort was, by any other name, a fluke. Des Lytle heading into his own net in a desperate attempt to clear a ball that looped to him off the legs of his goalkeeper.

On the hour the trusty left boot of Stuart Pearce drove Forest back into contention, a fabulous strike after Phillips had touched a free-kick to him, but Liverpool's response came within three minutes.

Barger, a substitute for Fowler, who limped off with a slight injury, crossed with pace from the left and Collymore effortlessly steered the ball home.

Liverpool: James, McAteer, Wright (Matte, 45min), Babb, Ruddock, Bjornnby, McManaman, Barnes, Thomas, Collymore, Fowler (Barger, 56), Nottingham Forest: Crossley, Lytle, Cooper, Warner, Pearce, Phillips, Campbell, Haaland, Allen, Woan, Saunders.

Referee: G Barber (Warwick).

BBC's review almost over the Hill



Jim White

SUNDAY evening proved beyond question that bitter-sweet is no longer the best-known oxymoron in the English language: Damon Hill was voted the BBC's Sports Personality of the Year.

Uninspiring he may be but Hill showed a nifty gear-change in the chicane to shake off concerted campaigns mounted on behalf of rivals. As usual the fishing lobby tried to have their man, Bob Nudd, installed through vigorous gerrymandering, and a bunch of students flooded the BBC with e-mail nominating Justin Fashanu.

The most convincing effort came from Regatta magazine, which printed a voting slip with Steve Redgrave's name on it and urged readers to post it in. Like the Labour Party apparatchiks' efforts to spin Tony Blair to the Today programme's Man of the Year award, however, it failed and Redgrave, possibly for the first time in his life, trailed in second.

Hill, blinking softly as he received the trophy, blandly delivered the required platitudes. These, oddly, did not include thanks to Williams for supplying him with the tools with which to become Formula One champion of the world. Though on second thoughts such a comment might have been a bit superfluous, like Evander Holyfield thanking his mum and dad for giving him his fists.

But Hill did pay generous tribute to the BBC for covering his sport so expertly. Which added an extra poignancy to the proceedings: next season the BBC will not be broadcasting the sport in which its Personality of the Year competes.

Indeed there was a sense in which Sunday's programme marked less a review of the year than the end of an era: motor racing is on its way from the corporation's clutches, the FA Cup will soon be gone, and who knows what is happening with the Five Nations Championship?

It won't be long before the BBC's entire Sports Review resembles the round-up of the boxing year screened on Sunday, which, thanks to the democratic efforts of Messrs King

and Warren, is already reduced to a couple of stiffs and some footage of pugilists on training jogs along the beach.

The shame is that the BBC does this kind of thing so well; no matter how dull the winner of the award is, the Sports Review of the Year is an essential night in for fans across the country.

As usual there were plenty of reminiscences: Robbie and Henry Paul showing Jack Rowell how rugby can be played; Greg Norman proving that it is not only the England cricket team who are prone to self-destruction; and Dickie Bird walking out at Lord's for the last time so choked with emotion that he attempted to wipe away his tears without first removing his spectacles.

There was fun in the studio too: a re-enactment of Euro 96 involving schoolchildren which was only marginally less laughable than the actual event's opening ceremony; Willie Carson and Walter Swinburn presenting Frankie Dettori with a birthday cake in the shape of a horse's head, apparently supplied by bakers to the Mafia; and a Parslympian flirting with Sue Barker (he admitted afterwards he was visually impaired). Also there was Des Lynam, gently teasing the superstars in his audience.

"So," he said to Terry Venables, who had clearly been putting in a few hours under the sun in preparation for taking up his job as Australia's football coach, "you've got the big one coming up... against Tahiti."

And when Michael Johnson claimed that his run in the Olympic 200 metres final was not by any means his perfect race, Des, quick as the flash from a pair of Gold Nikes, responded: "Where did you go wrong, exactly?"

AS ALWAYS, too, there were moments best forgotten. This year it was a penalty shoot-out involving Dettori, Donovan Bailey, Tim Henman, Denis Lewis and Frank Bruno, who, forgetting his trainers, cut a pantomime figure in shorts, no socks and a pair of crocodile-skin loafers.

In goal was Peter Shilton, who last Saturday completed his 999th league match when Leyton Orient played Fulham. The sight of Bruno's winner spinning off a loafer and trickling through Shilton's legs will not have had many Os fans licking their lips in anticipation of his 1,000th appearance.

For the rest of us it threw up equally sobering possibilities: that within five years the biggest event the BBC will have to review will be pre-celebrity penalty shoot-out.

...and you assumed

NO BILLS

...were all take and no give"

Assume nothing - but expect some pleasant surprises! A monthly American Express statement not only tells you what you've spent, but also carries special offers your spending has earned - things like savings at exclusive hotels, or a free bottle of wine with your meal at a local restaurant, or even 15% off your next raincoat. There are literally hundreds of offers available each month. We only select the ones most suited to you, and print them right on the statement. So every month, you could be getting something special from us, simply by spending on the Card.

To find out how we can help you do more call:

0800 700767

Cards

American Express Services Europe Limited, Reg. Office, Portland House, 1 Stag Place, London SW1E 5SZ, Reg. No. 1833128.

Guardian Crossword No 20,839

Set by Araucaria

Across

9 Diamonds left in camera holder to be picked up by sucker (4,5)

10 Colation in French for the one church (5)

11 Call journalist a model character in the Doctor's Dilemma (7)

12 Escaper makes arbitrator turn to horse (7)

13 See 22

14 Swallow, one of a pack, is plastic (5,4)

15 Drinker and how he's eyed food? (4,3)

17 Skip a page for a rough and toothed blade (3,4)

19 As a bridge over the Camel should be? (10)

22, 13 Lost holding each way in wet part of Scotland (4,4)

Down

1 Moderate half-way to 8? (6-2-3-4)

2 Shrub from North African islands (8)

3, 25 Jokes about boy king in his Sunday best (4,4)

4 "We galloped -" (hell for leather?) (3,5)

5 Why bridge players get a bit cross (6)

6 Richard at no. 1 - more apt to beetle? (5,3)

7 Puzzle with variations (6)

CROSSWORD SOLUTION 20,839

8 Extinction of family at railhead (3,3,2,3,4)

16 Hotelier turned up before Prohibition without a licence (8)

17 Sound upper part of bridge, according to chief priest (8)

18 Necromantically raised chap up on wrong date (8)

20 Lane for computer? (6)

21 Land to preserve commercial article (6)

25 See 3

Solution tomorrow

23 Stuck? Then call our solutions line on 0841 339 222. Calls cost 50p per minute Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm, and 45p per minute at all other times. Service supplied by AT&T.

صبرنا من الامل